

■ Volume 30 – Number 30 ■ 3 September 2026 ■ 21 Elul 5786

south african

Jewish Report

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CHEV GROUP CEO MESSAGE

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Saul Tomson



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South African Jewish Report

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Government criticised over one-sided ICJ statement

NICOLA MILTZ

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) is facing fierce criticism over its “biased” statement accompanying South Africa’s latest submission to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

It has accused Israel of killing journalists to conceal its “crimes”, torturing Palestinian detainees, and killing an average of one Palestinian child a day since the ceasefire. It makes no mention of Hamas.

DIRCO announced on 28 August that South Africa had submitted a “substantial dossier of information” to the ICJ. It said the dossier was intended to assist the committee of judges responsible for monitoring implementation of the court’s provisional measures.

The dossier itself has not been made public.

The DIRCO statement said, “Since the announcement of the so-called ‘ceasefire’, on average, one Palestinian child has been killed every day by the Israeli military.”

It said Palestinians were being “herded into an ever-shrinking sliver of territory and subjected to unbearable conditions of life”, and detainees have been “tortured, subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, and to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment”.

“To prevent any record of its crimes, Israel has killed local journalists, barred foreign journalists, and prevented UN-mandated investigative bodies from entering Gaza,” DIRCO said.

Yet Hamas isn’t mentioned even once in the statement. Neither are the Hamas-led atrocities of 7 October, the hostages abducted into Gaza, nor reported breaches of the ceasefire by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups.

“This is not law. It is a government inventing a verdict, attaching the ICJ’s name to it, and hoping nobody reads the docket,” Rolene Marks, national spokesperson for the South African Zionist Federation, told the *SA Jewish Report*.

DIRCO states unequivocally, “Regrettably, Israel has not complied with the orders.”

Marks said it was presenting South Africa’s position as if it were a determination by the court.

“The dossier itself has not been made public, so we cannot comment on what it contains, and neither can anyone else quoting it,” she said. “We can, however, comment on the government’s announcement, which asserts Israeli non-compliance with the court’s provisional measures as established fact. It is nothing of the kind.”

“The ICJ has made no finding of genocide against Israel, and the committee established to monitor implementation has made no public determination on compliance. Yet DIRCO speaks as though its submission is already a judgment.”

David Benjamin, an Israel-based rabbi, international lawyer, and commentator on the law of war and Israeli legal affairs, said, “About two and a half years on, the South African government is still flogging a dead horse that was never alive to begin with. Concern for humanitarian conditions in Gaza is laudable, but the patently false accusation of ‘genocide’ is an affront to international law.”

Anne Herzberg, legal adviser at NGO Monitor, was equally critical. “The move by South Africa and its timing suggests that the government is, yet again, exploiting the court for purely political ends.”

She said the ICJ’s provisional measures were “largely displaced in November 2025 by Security Council resolution 2803, and the new international framework it established for Gaza”.

Herzberg also accused South Africa of ignoring developments that she believes undermine its case, including information about the number of combatants included in Gaza casualty figures.

“It is clear that the South African government is therefore trying to deflect from the reality that its fraudulent claims to the court have been exposed and eviscerated,” she said.

Herzberg questioned whether South Africa’s continued pursuit of the case was serving other interests. “Another question that the government continues to refuse to answer is whether it is also acting on behalf of Hamas and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps at a moment when they are under severe international pressure and need these proceedings to assist their military campaigns.”

DIRCO said at least 73 407 Palestinians have been killed



In line for a *brocha*

Members of the community meeting Rav Yitzchok Ezrachi

See story on page 3

and 174 335 wounded in Gaza since 7 October 2023, describing this as more than 10% of the Palestinian population in Gaza. It doesn’t identify the source of those figures in its statement or distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Sara Gon, a fellow at the South African Institute of Race Relations, strongly challenged DIRCO’s numbers. “It is estimated that between 17 000 and 23 000 of the deaths were combatants, out of an estimated pre-war force of roughly 25 000 to 30 000 fighters.

“So, at worst 2.5% of the population killed was civilian. Military experts have estimated that the combatant-to-civilian ratio was 1:1.5 or 1:1. This is

the lowest measure ever recorded in this type of urban warfare and this war was considered the most difficult urban warfare environments in which to conduct warfare.”

Gon was particularly critical of the exclusion of Hamas from DIRCO’s statement.

“So, not only are South Africa’s facts embarrassingly inaccurate but absolutely no mention is made of Hamas’s reported ceasefire breaches. None.

“South Africa’s self-righteousness and hypocrisy threaten to tarnish both DIRCO’s image and the image of the ANC government more broadly,” she said.

Continued on page 3>>

Works of heart

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SAJBD encouraged by meeting with top police

LEE TANKLE

Leaders of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) are reassured that the police are taking antisemitic incidents seriously and want the local Jewish community to feel safe.

They met with South African Police Service (SAPS) top brass in Pretoria on 27 August to discuss security and specific incidents.

But the Board was disheartened to hear that there are no new leads in the investigation into the improvised explosive device (IED) thrown at the Jewish communal headquarters in Cape Town in December last year.

Zev Krengel, national president of the SAJBD, says the Board has maintained a long-standing relationship with the SAPS and the broader security cluster, meeting

regularly with police leadership for about 25 years.

"We have very good relations with the security cluster, including SAPS, State Security, and Crime Intelligence, but we always like to formalise this by meeting them every year if possible, he said. The reason we requested this one now was that there has been a lot of movement within SAPS, with changes in leaderships."

The SAPS delegation was headed by Lieutenant General Hilda Senthumule, the Divisional Commissioner for Detective and Forensic Services and acting Deputy National Commissioner for Crime Detection.

She was joined by acting Gauteng Provincial Commissioner Major General Fred Kekana; Major General Nonhlanhla Kubheka, the Johannesburg District Commissioner; Brigadier Sydney Ngele from Visible Policing; Gauteng head of Organised Crime Brigadier Pulane Gopane; and others.

The main item on the agenda was the investigation into the Cape Town IED case, as well as an incident in 2025 when a man carrying an axe approached the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre. He was intercepted by security before entering the premises, but allegedly threatened to return with a firearm before fleeing to a nearby park, where he was apprehended by community security and police.

Unfortunately, there have been no breakthroughs so far in either case, says Krengel.

"I think there's a general sense of frustration with the case with the IED. From what I understand, the Hawks investigation has reached something of a dead end because they haven't been able to find any new leads. But we still have to keep the pressure on and ensure that the case isn't closed. Everyone agrees that it was a hate crime



The South African Jewish Board of Deputies and police leaders

and that it needs to remain a priority," he says.

"The Durban case, however, was downgraded because the individual involved was considered mentally disturbed. Our view is that even if someone is mentally disturbed, it doesn't mean they aren't a danger to the Jewish community. We're therefore trying to have that case classified again as a hate crime, which would require the Hawks to investigate it," he says.

Senthumule confirmed to the meeting that "the Jewish community, like every other community in South Africa, is entitled to equal protection under the Constitution. Safety is not a privilege; it remains the duty of the state, and SAPS is mandated to fulfil that obligation to all South African citizens."

Krengel says this relationship is important because "whether it's a Zionist Federation conference, Yom Ha'atzmaut, a memorial service, or an event where we need public-order policing, particularly in Cape Town when marches take place, it is vital".

It's also part of a much broader discussion, he says,

with Jewish communities around the world increasingly the target of hate crimes.

"We've been very fortunate in South Africa that we can live openly and comfortably as Jews and Zionists, but that relies, in part, on the police and security cluster taking every antisemitic incident seriously. That's why we continuously reiterate the potential dangers," he says.

Senthumule said it was stressed at the meeting that the right to protest does not extend to "criminal intimidation, incitement, or attacks on people or communal

spaces, and that visible policing must be backed by effective investigations, evidence preservation, and case management that leads to meaningful outcomes".

The SAPS has always shown a strong commitment to protecting South African Jewry, says Krengel. "No matter what our relationship with the government may be, they have always maintained that their responsibility is to protect the Constitution and the people who live within it. They understand the seriousness of these issues and have never dismissed our concerns."

The current assessment is that there is no immediate or tangible threat to the Jewish community.

What also encourages Krengel is that a younger police leadership showed a real commitment to working with the Jewish community. They gave them their contact details, and there was a genuine willingness to engage. They also agreed that the regions would hold follow-up meetings, with KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape, and Gauteng, engaging directly with their respective provincial leadership.

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The order of Selichot

Torah Thought

Early on Sunday morning we begin reciting Selichot prayers. Actually, very early. Traditionally, this service takes place at midnight in shuls around the world, on the Saturday night before Rosh Hashanah. We continue rising before dawn every day for Selichot for the rest of the week, with many communities continuing until Yom Kippur.

I must qualify the word "we" – I am referring to Ashkenazi Jews. Our Sephardi brothers have been doing this for three weeks already, since the beginning of the month of Elul. Ouch! Then again, they got to eat rice over Pesach half a year ago. I personally enjoy my morning sleep more than rice, but each to their own traditions and customs.

Selichot, from the word *selicha* (forgiveness), is a collection of liturgical compositions particularly suited to this time of year, when we engage in introspection ahead of the Divine Judgement of Rosh Hashanah. Its roots reach back to the Talmud, while organised pre-dawn prayers for forgiveness are documented in the period of the Geonim more than a thousand years ago.

Over the centuries, generations of great Jewish poets added the haunting penitential poems that surround its core – the repeated recitation of the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy.

"Hashem, Hashem, G-d, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and truth, preserving kindness for thousands of generations, forgiving wrongdoing, rebellion and sin, and granting forgiveness". (Exodus 34: 6-7)

When Moshe was on Mount Sinai, pleading for forgiveness for his people after the golden calf, he was genuinely concerned that they would sin again in future and invoke Divine wrath. This is when Hashem revealed the Thirteen Attributes to him. The Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 17b) describes the circumstances in which this took place. "The Holy One, blessed be He, wrapped Himself like a chazan and showed Moshe the order of prayer. He said to him, 'Whenever the Jewish people sin, let them follow this order before Me, and I will forgive them.'"

Let us read the words of the Talmud carefully. It doesn't quote Hashem as saying, "recite these words before Me". This isn't some form of magical incantation with supernatural powers, achieving Divine pardon through mere repetition. The exact words are "let them follow this order before Me", suggesting there is something we must do, not just say. Following this order means emulating Hashem in His compassion towards us – *Imitatio Dei* – by showing

kindness, forgiveness, and tolerance towards others. Now that is more of a challenge than even getting up at the crack of dawn!

The Talmud concludes, "A covenant has been made regarding the Thirteen Attributes: they never return empty-handed."

May Hashem hear our prayers. May He look down from above and see His

children acting compassionately and graciously, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and truth, and granting forgiveness to others. And may He do the same for us.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin
Oxford Shul



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South African Jewish Report

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Community lines up to receive brachot from renowned rabbi

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Giving blessings to the hundreds of people longing to meet him, Rav Yitzchok Ezrachi brought strength and inspiration to the Joburg Jewish community this past week.

Rosh yeshiva (dean) of Yeshivas Mir Yerushalyim, which with 10 000 students is the biggest yeshiva in the world, Ezrachi, 92, says he is simply doing what Hashem wants from him.

Slightly hunched over as families clamoured to meet him, when he lifted his

after Shabbat on 29 August, almost 400 people arrived at the airport the next day to welcome him. Their joy was palpable as they sang and danced with him in the arrivals hall. Since then, the *rav* has barely rested, tirelessly speaking at schools, shuls, *yeshivot* and *kolelim*, and community gatherings.

In separate talks given to the women and men of the community this week, he attracted a total of more than 1 000 attendees, many of whom stayed behind to ask questions and request blessings. He hasn't received any payment for his visit, motivated instead by his desire to

most of the Jewish families from Kelmé came to South Africa, he came with them, and was instrumental in founding the Jewish community in Oudtshoorn, where he served as a rabbi for 24 years. He died in an accident in Johannesburg while visiting en route to joining his family in Israel. He was buried in the Brixton Cemetery.

Now, in South Africa for the first time, Ezrachi fulfilled his long-held dream to visit his grandfather's grave, which he did with tears streaming

relationships," he said. "Work on them. Let's get on with each other better and work on matters relating to our relationship with Hashem."

While Hashem created the whole world and all the nations of the world, he said, the Jewish people are like children to Hashem and so he is our father. "It's like a parent with two children. When they give to one another, when they care for one another, it gives tremendous happiness to the parents. So, us working on getting along better, on creating shalom, on rectifying and fixing mistakes, is very important.

When a Jew does a *mitzvah*, it doesn't stay here in the world, it goes higher forever – the impact is eternal."

So, he said, there's a tremendous ability within the Jewish people. "When we work on these two elements, interpersonal relationships and our relationship with Hashem, and we work on doing more of what He wants from us, it has an unbelievable capacity. There is no comparison with such good deeds and acts of service."

Doing *mitzvot* is especially relevant

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in a post-7 October world, Ezrachi said, recalling visiting the north of Israel with his students, and staying there until 03:00, sharing their strength in Hashem. "A lot of people have been returned to Hashem because of this. We need to return to ourselves, and we need to return to Him, and we need to do it with love and happiness, as Hashem loves us."

The width and length of the Torah is endless, he said. "You need to get very deep because even when you think you perhaps accomplish something, you're just scratching the surface, so it requires strength."

Speaking of the *rav's* visit, which he helped to arrange, Rabbi Aharon Zulberg of The Base Shul



Photo: Davis Photography

Rav Yitzchok Ezrachi addresses The Base community

head, the *rav's* vibrant blue eyes revealed a man still energised by fulfilling his divine mission. This involves teaching Torah and travelling the world to spread *chizuk* (spiritual or emotional strength) in Hashem.

A world-renowned *talmid chacham* (master student and teacher), Ezrachi has served as *rosh yeshiva* since 1979. He has guided thousands of students, sharing profound Torah learning, tools to live a meaningful and ethical life, and a love for Israel. He has also spent decades travelling to strengthen communities around the world, often attracting thousands who gather to listen to his teachings.

"If even one person is sad ... and that person gets some strength to be close to G-d because of me, that's the thing that makes me happiest," he told the *SA Jewish Report*. "It will all be worth it because that's what *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* [The Holy One, Blessed be He] wants from me and that's what I want to do."

While the Joburg community was informed of Ezrachi's impending arrival only

strengthen the Jewish community and inspire people to be better versions of themselves.

His reception here isn't just testament to Ezrachi's immense reputation, but also to his background. His life is steeped in a rabbinical history with ties to South Africa. His late father-in-law was a *rosh yeshiva* of Mir, HaGaon Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, one of the most influential Torah figures of the 20th century. Ezrachi's late wife was the granddaughter of Reb Leizer Finkel, also *rosh yeshiva* of Mir in both Poland and Jerusalem.

While founded in 1815 in the town of Mir (now in Belarus), the yeshiva temporarily moved to Lithuania during World War II to escape Soviet and Nazi persecution. Therein lies its connection to the South African Jewish community, which largely has roots in Lithuania.

Ezrachi himself has an even deeper connection to South Africa. His maternal grandfather, Rav Baruch Shlom, was a rabbi of a town in Lithuania called Kelmé. When

down his face. "There's a great power in going to *daven* to Hashem at my grandfather's grave," he said. "What you need, you will get."

Ezrachi's late brother HaGaon Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, *rosh yeshiva* of Ateres Yisroel, travelled to South Africa annually for many years. He stayed in the same house and bedroom in which Ezrachi is staying now. So, it's a multigenerational impact that goes back many years and is now extending into a new group of South Africans.

Sharing his message for Elul, as Rosh Hashanah approaches, the *rav* said that everyone must aspire to do what Hashem wants of them. "One example is interpersonal

relationships," he said. "Work on them. Let's get on with each other better and work on matters relating to our relationship with Hashem."

While Hashem created the whole world and all the nations of the world, he said, the Jewish people are like children to Hashem and so he is our father. "It's like a parent with two children. When they give to one another, when they care for one another, it gives tremendous happiness to the parents. So, us working on getting along better, on creating shalom, on rectifying and fixing mistakes, is very important.

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Doing *mitzvot* is especially relevant



Waiting for Rav Yitzchok Ezrachi at OR Tambo International Airport

said the level of passion and electricity around him has exceeded all expectations. "The Rav also said that he couldn't get over the warmth and kindness and the love and respect for Judaism and Torah that people have here. He just kept repeating how excited he was by it all. Within the context of where he comes from and who he is, this is very inspiring for all of us."

Government criticised over one-sided ICJ statement

>>>Continued from page 1

While DIRCO repeatedly uses 7 October as the starting point for its casualty figures, it doesn't explain what occurred that day, when Hamas-led terrorists attacked southern Israel, killing about 1 200 people and abducting 251 hostages into Gaza.

DIRCO's statement also makes no reference to reported attacks on Israeli forces since the ceasefire took effect. Israel has accused Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups of several breaches, including attacks on troops and efforts to rebuild military infrastructure. Hamas has, in turn, accused Israel of repeatedly violating the ceasefire.

Attorney Gavin Rome said an important distinction had to be drawn between South Africa's legal submission to the ICJ and DIRCO's public account of the conflict.

"The dossier is South Africa's evidential and legal submission; whether it establishes non-compliance with the provisional measures is ultimately a matter for the ICJ," he said.

Rome said Hamas isn't the respondent in the ICJ proceedings and isn't a state subject to the court's orders in the way Israel is. Its omission therefore doesn't, by itself, determine whether Israel has

complied with the measures directed at it.

However, Rome said the position was different when considering DIRCO's statement as an account presented to the public. "As a public account of the wider conflict, the statement is plainly selective. It advances grave allegations against Israel while making no reference to the 7 October atrocities, the hostages, Hamas's continuing conduct, or reported ceasefire breaches."

Rome stressed that these omissions don't absolve Israel of its obligations under international law. "The essential distinction is between the court's interim orders, South Africa's allegations of non-compliance, and a final determination," he said. "The genocide case has not yet been finally decided."

The case remains years from resolution. South Africa has until November 2027 to file its next written pleading, while Israel has until May 2029 to respond, after which the ICJ is expected to determine the next procedural steps.

DIRCO had not responded to questions by the time of going to press.

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UCT lecturer paints Jews as ‘advocates of oppression’

TALI FEINBERG

When University of Cape Town (UCT) politics lecturer Dr Lwazi Lushaba told students in 2021 that “Hitler did no wrong”, it caused an uproar and a UCT investigation. But five years later, Lushaba is still teaching and saying the same thing to first-year students. He makes his statements in a course that is compulsory for first-year politics students at UCT. Lushaba is now also making biased statements about Jews.

In a lecture in March, Lushaba told students, “The fact that yesterday you were a victim doesn’t mean that today you will be an advocate for freedom, because we have seen the example of the Jews who were victims of oppression in Germany. When they come to South Africa they become advocates of oppression, or when they go to Israel, they become advocates of oppression.”

In recent weeks, another UCT lecturer, Dr Anandaroop Sen, told first-year history students that the Balfour Declaration, which led to the formation of the State of Israel, was “one of the greatest injustices of the 20th century”. He subsequently sent the class content from Al Jazeera, which stated that “Leading up to Israel’s birth in 1948, more than 750 000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from their homes by Zionist militias”. The content also ignored key facts, such as Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. Sen was teaching that department’s only course for first-year students in the second semester, making it compulsory for those taking history.

On 27 August, the UCT Department of English Literary Studies hosted local scholar Ali Ridha Khan for a seminar. Khan presented a paper that justified the 7 October massacre. It said that Palestinians shouldn’t pursue the peace process but rather engage in violence. In the paper, Khan victim-blamed Israelis, and denied that Hamas intended to target civilians. He implied that most of the atrocities were lies made up by Israel.

Members of the UCT community approached the *SA Jewish Report* out of concern that lecturers and a guest lecturer are pushing extreme opinions onto students, simplifying complexities, and making sweeping, biased statements.

As in 2021, this year Lushaba told students, “Hitler did nothing wrong. All Hitler did wrong was to do unto white people what white people have reserved for black people.” Lushaba was explaining the impact of Hitler’s rise to power and the Holocaust on the discipline of political science.

He said the world “invented” the “concept of the Holocaust” only because it was white people who were



Dr Lwazi Lushaba delivering a speech at an EFF event

killed. “We are told six million Jews died as a result of the Holocaust. [But] when black people died, the world doesn’t remember,” he said. “When it happens to white people, they will invent a law called ‘genocide’, ‘Holocaust’, and other concepts.”

He said “all Hitler did” was question what scientists taught at the time, and asked, “Who should take responsibility for the Holocaust? It isn’t Hitler. All Hitler did was to give effect to an idea that was already existing. It wasn’t Hitler who was responsible.”

Lushaba said, “Once you profess not to care about the Holocaust, it’s as if you’ve committed a crime.”

A student in his class complained to the head of department, the Office of Inclusivity and Change (OIC), and the dean about Lushaba’s statements. After a long delay, the dean determined that no steps would be taken against Lushaba because of academic freedom. The OIC proposed a meeting between the student and Lushaba. The student declined, concerned about being targeted.

The *SA Jewish Report* asked Lushaba several questions, but he didn’t respond.

When Lushaba said “Hitler did no wrong” in 2021, the university established an evaluation panel, which found the lecture was acceptable within academic freedom. It said no action was necessary, according to UCT spokesperson Elijah Moholola.

But a source familiar with this investigation, speaking anonymously for their own security, says this was a “sham process”. They say that in 2021, a panel examined the issue and met with the lecturer. “Lushaba refused to provide an explanation of his statements, but a majority on the panel was inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt.”

According to this same source, “in 2021, Lushaba could plausibly claim that he misspoke or was misunderstood. This defence falls away when he returns to make similar statements.”

The *SA Jewish Report* also sent questions to Sen and Khan, head of the English department Dr Hedley Twidle regarding Khan’s lecture, and to Moholola, regarding all three incidents.

Only Moholola responded.

He says UCT takes seriously concerns raised about the conduct of its staff, including concerns about statements attributed to individual academics.

“At the same time, universities are spaces in which staff and students must be able to engage with difficult, contentious, and uncomfortable ideas as part of legitimate academic inquiry,” says Moholola. “Academic

freedom doesn’t mean that every statement made by staff represents the position of the university, nor does it imply institutional endorsement.”

He says UCT can confirm that concerns about Lushaba’s comments were previously investigated, “and the investigation didn’t find any wrongdoing”.

Regarding Sen’s comments, “UCT isn’t aware of any formal report or complaint. The university therefore cannot comment on allegations that haven’t been considered through formal processes.”

Regarding Khan’s lecture, Moholola says, “The seminar was a departmental academic event and shouldn’t be understood as an endorsement by UCT of the views expressed by the speaker, or of any particular position.”

He says UCT is committed to academic freedom and to providing space for scholarly engagement with contested subjects, including through debate and critical scrutiny. “This doesn’t mean that the university endorses every position advanced by speakers at its academic events.”

He says UCT has processes for addressing conduct that “falls outside the lawful bounds of academic freedom or the university’s policies”, and which is brought to its attention. “Those processes are based on evidence and due process.”

In addition, “academic freedom carries responsibilities”, says Moholola. “University teaching should facilitate critical engagement, and university students should be capable of assessing arguments critically; and interrogating evidence and competing interpretations rather than simply accepting an academic’s views.”

But an academic speaking anonymously says that no lecturer should “force feed” their political views to students. “Lecturers are supposed to guard against exactly this. They aren’t political advocates, and students aren’t there to be lectured on their political beliefs.”

Moholola says that where there are specific allegations of misconduct, “students are encouraged to report them through the appropriate channels, and the university will consider them in accordance with its policies and applicable procedures.”

Head of the South African Union of Jewish Students Western Cape, Rachel Segal, says UCT must “absolutely” call out antisemitism, demand accountability, and refuse to normalise it.

“But we shouldn’t allow it to define our experience as Jewish students. The Jewish community at UCT is resilient, proud, and flourishing,” she says.

“I don’t believe it is accurate to portray UCT as an inherently unsafe place for Jewish students,” says Segal, who attends the university herself. “Antisemitism is a very real and concerning issue across university campuses, and UCT is certainly not unique in grappling with it.”

She says the “response should be to live as prouder Jews, and to continue creating a Jewish presence on campus that cannot be diminished by the prejudice of others”.

Cape SAJBD executive director Daniel Bloch says the

Board is aware of the three lectures and the concerns raised. The Cape SAJBD recently received further information relating to the matter involving Lushaba. “While the incident took place some months ago, we believe it is important to review all the information now available before reaching any conclusions,” he says.

“We also need to consider these comments in light of previous concerns raised about statements made by Dr Lushaba,” says Bloch. “We will review all the available information, establish the facts, and then determine whether there are grounds for any further action.”

He says the Cape SAJBD remains committed to advocating for Jewish students and staff, “and will take appropriate action where warranted.”

Stellenbosch students have a Jewish representative

LEE TANKLE

For the first time in about 25 years, a Jewish student is on the Student Representative Council (SRC) at Stellenbosch University.

Ethan Epstein-Kay, a third-year law student from East London, was voted onto the SRC on 31 July. He represents not only the Jews on campus, but all students who feel like they have no voice.

Epstein-Kay was one of the founders of the South African Union of Jewish Students branch at the historically Afrikaans university. He saw a need for student leadership, and it was a natural progression to wanting to run for the SRC.

His campaign started when he had to get 200 signatures to endorse his nomination.

“That’s where it sort of crystallised how important my running for the SRC was,” he said. “In fact, most students couldn’t even name a single person who sits on the SRC, which means that they can’t question them or ask them anything. For the first two years of my university career I didn’t know that there was an SRC office in Stellenbosch. Neither do most students. And I think that if you have such an important institution, you need it to be able to help.”

The elections in late July coincided with the first week of the semester, fondly called Golden Week.

“It was quite challenging in terms of getting voters and voter turnout, but it was the first week of term, and it ran from Monday until the next Monday, and every day there was a caucus as well,” he said.

Epstein-Kay found out he had been elected that Friday. “I was shocked because although I poured my heart into the campaign and spoke to as many people as possible, I wasn’t sure it would pay off. That said, many students at Stellenbosch don’t really care to vote, which is another fundamental issue. I think that stems from the lack of trust in the SRC as a body,” he said.

Being the first Jewish SRC member in such a long time isn’t something he takes lightly.

“There’s a Jewish voice on the SRC, which I think is important, and it’s twofold. I’m able to represent Jewish students and their interests. But beyond that, I’m able to bring a different perspective to the table, a different idea of how things can work. That’s the beauty of the SRC this year, it’s many different people from diverse backgrounds, and that’s where you find strength as a team.”

Over the next year, Epstein-Kay plans to ensure students on campus know who is representing them. Beyond that, he intends to propose a religious observance policy, under which students would have the option, when they register at the start of the year, to indicate any religious observance requirements they have.

“Before assessment dates are finalised, it would make it far easier for the Registrar to move assessments that fall on a religious holiday. And not only for Jewish students. For the whole university. Muslim students, Hindu students, and every other minority faith on this campus,” he said.

The issue extends beyond assessments. “If a student has to miss a lecture to observe Yom Kippur, they currently have to approach each lecturer individually and ask for it to be recorded. That puts the burden on the student rather than on the system, and the outcome depends on who you happen to ask. A clear policy removes that. It takes an unequal burden off religious minorities and makes the answer consistent.”



Ethan Epstein-Kay

Visiting Jewish Cemeteries

It is customary to visit the graves of family before Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur

VISITING TIMES

Westpark: Sunday – Friday from 07h00 to 16h00
Brixton: Sunday – Friday from 07h00 to 16h00.

Braamfontein: Please contact the Westpark Cemetery office to make the necessary arrangements.
The community is encouraged to visit this cemetery in groups of at least two.

There will be no drive-through traffic to graves on Sundays.
No exceptions can be made.

UWC confers honorary doctorates on Israel critics

CLAUDIA GROSS

Jewish organisations and academics are criticising the University of the Western Cape (UWC) decision to confer honorary doctorates on four prominent figures who have taken an anti-Israel stance.

UWC honoured former Cabinet minister Dr Naledi Pandor, former Irish President Mary Robinson, lawyer Adila Hassim, and Francesca Albanese, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, at a ceremony on Friday.

The university says they were recognised for their distinguished contributions to human rights, international law, scholarship, public service, and social justice. The doctorates have nevertheless prompted questions about whether UWC is using its institutional standing to endorse the recipients' anti-Israel positions.

David Benatar, emeritus professor in the University of Cape Town's Philosophy Department, said an honorary doctorate can be understood as an endorsement.



Dr Naledi Pandor, Advocate Adila Hassim, and Mary Robinson. Inset: Francesca Albanese

"While universities sometimes award honorary doctorates for academic accomplishments, at least as often they award them for other achievements," he said. "When a university awards an honorary degree, and especially when the accompanying citation mentions particular activities of the recipient, the awarding of the degree should be seen as an endorsement of those activities."

Benatar said UWC's public statements about Hassim, Albanese, and Pandor indicated that their positions on Israel formed part of the reason for the awards. He said the awarding of the doctorates reflected what he described as ideological hostility to Israel across South African higher education.

"This can be expected to contribute to the alienation of the vast majority of South African Jews," Benatar said.

A South African Jewish professor who asked to remain anonymous, said universities usually subjected candidates to nomination, selection, and careful vetting. The professor said one consideration was whether an award might embarrass the institution.

"An honorary degree is a statement by the university," they said. "It's an exchange: the university honours you, and in turn some of your aura rubs off on the university." The professor said the UWC awards appeared to constitute a political statement.

Benji Shulman, director of the Middle East Africa Research Institute, also questioned the institutional effect of the awards. "UWC has a long history of supporting radical extremist politics."

He said the four recipients had all been involved in parts of the UN that had been hostile to Israel at different times. "The doctorates are designed to highlight the work of these individuals and burnish their credentials for further activism in this regard," he said.

The executive director of the South African Zionist Federation's Cape Council, Joshua Schewitz, said three of the four recipients had records that he believed should concern a university.

He highlighted Robinson's role as secretary-general of the 2001 World Conference against Racism in Durban. The conference became deeply controversial over antisemitism and disputes surrounding Israel.

He also pointed to Albanese's work as UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. Albanese was placed on the United States Treasury's sanctions list in July 2025.

Pandor was South Africa's minister of International Relations and Cooperation from 2019 to 2024. During

her tenure, South Africa brought its case against Israel, under the Genocide Convention, before the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Hassim was lead opening counsel for South Africa in that case in January 2024. The ICJ has issued provisional measures in the case, but hasn't made a final ruling on the merits of South Africa's "genocide" allegations.

UWC has stressed that the awards shouldn't be reduced to the recipients' positions on Israel. Gasant Abarder, UWC's media spokesperson, told the *SA Jewish Report* that the university followed established governance processes. "Nominations are considered by the Honorary Degrees Committee, recommended through its Senate, and ultimately approved by Council," he said.

Abarder said the recipients were recognised for contributions to human rights, international law, scholarship, public service, and social justice. He pointed to Pandor's decades of public service and Hassim's work on constitutional and socio-economic rights.

Hassim's career includes work on HIV treatment, basic education, mineworkers' rights, and the Life Esidimeni tragedy. She is an evidence leader at the Madlanga Commission of Inquiry into political corruption.

UWC also rejected the suggestion that honouring people who advocate for Palestinian rights raises questions about Jewish safety or inclusion.

"Such a framing conflates advocacy for Palestinian rights and criticism of the actions and policies of the occupying State of Israel with hostility towards Jewish people," Abarder said. "These aren't equivalent."

The university said its position was consistent with its history and its commitment to opposing apartheid, occupation, and structural injustice. In 2024, UWC announced its academic disengagement from Israeli institutions. That decision followed a June 2024 motion endorsed by the UWC Council, Senate, Convocation, and Student Representative Council. In October 2025, UWC required bidders for a sportswear tender to provide a signed certificate confirming "non-affiliation with the State of Israel".

UWC said the requirement was aligned with its decision to disengage academically from Israeli institutions. The *SA Jewish Report* previously reported that the university's Palestinian Solidarity Association had also posted material relating to the 7 October Hamas attack and Israel on its social media accounts.

Images circulated by the association have also shown UWC graduates wearing Palestinian-themed graduation items from the company Freedom Scrubs.

UWC also posthumously honoured anti-apartheid activist Charlotte Maxeke and women's rights activist Mandisa Monakali, while mathematician Professor Emeritus Loyiso Nongxa received an honorary degree. Its citation for Robinson highlights her career as a lawyer, Ireland's first woman president, and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Pandor's citation emphasises her career in education, Parliament, government, and international diplomacy. Hassim's citation focuses on almost three decades of legal work advancing constitutional rights, healthcare, and social justice.

Albanese's citation describes her as an internationally recognised legal scholar and human rights expert whose work has focused on international law, forced displacement, and the rights of refugees and occupied populations.

For critics, the question is whether a university's decision to honour them also communicates approval of their political positions. It raises questions about how universities use their institutional authority when recognising public figures whose positions on Israel are deeply contested.

The issue also touches on whether universities that describe themselves as inclusive can maintain space for disagreement over Israel while taking institutional positions on the conflict.



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Jewish Report

Reason to be proud

There is no question we have people who despise us. We have people who will skew all sorts of facts to make it look like we, and Jews in Israel, are not just bad people, but people who go out to commit heinous crimes as a matter of course.

As antisemitism rises around the world, I am continually shocked to find this hatred towards us growing and the stark inability of so many people to see us as people, much like them. If you read Benji Shulman’s opinion piece on the impact of the “menu cost” on antisemitism, you’ll see how hard it is to turn ugly sentiments around once they’ve escalated.

We also see how the national government has rewritten history in its latest statement in the trumped-up case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Whatever happened to 7 October 2023, the worst day in Jewish history since the Holocaust?

The SA government simply erased this from its memory, at least for the ICJ case. In truth, if the government feels the need to rewrite history to prove its point, surely it’s time to back down and realise it’s on the wrong side of history.

While we do need to keep calling out our haters, it is even more important to recognise the value, strength, and warmth within our own community.

While members of our community are at the forefront of outreach in this country, I am writing now about how this very community look after its own. When I consider how small our community really is, I’m amazed at what we are able to do both for ourselves and others.

I’m going to use the example of this last Sunday, packing Rosh Hashanah food parcels for Yad Aharon & Michael. Sundays are traditionally relaxing, rejuvenating days in Johannesburg, the calm before the storm of the week begins. It’s often the sleep-in day when there are no pressures or anything on the to-do list, other than perhaps a good braai with friends.

Having said that, there seemed to be an endless stream of Jozi Jews at the Yad *bayit* on Sunday morning, all coming to help pack the food bags for 750 families who need this to get through the *chaggim*.

I was so impressed by the smooth organisation of the process and the joyful participation of everyone concerned. There were *frum* and secular people, young kids and elderly folk, who all descended on the *bayit* to do their bit for the less fortunate in our community.

The music was blaring, which certainly kept the spirits up and many a foot tapping as people went along the steady production line. The sun was shining and everyone was smiling and chatting to each other as they did their bit. There was such a sense of camaraderie, or perhaps it’s better described as a sense of community. I felt so proud.

My point isn’t just about the amazing work that Yad Aharon & Michael do because it is just one of our phenomenal communal organisations. The work that the Chevrah Kadisha (Chev) does is beyond anyone’s expectation and few have a concept of the true extent of what it does for our community. For those who’ve fallen on hard times, for the elderly, for children, and I could go on. The reality is the Chev serves nearly 10 000 members of our community, about 25% of Johannesburg’s Jewish population.

Then we have Hatzolah, which, in the hands of mostly volunteers, deals with around 2 500 medical emergencies a year, seven days a week. Its response time is astonishingly between 30 seconds and five minutes. One of its volunteers might be in a business meeting when the call comes through and he will excuse himself and arrive at the scene while the dispatcher is still on the phone with the caller.

Hatzolah deals with people who are terrified, at their most vulnerable, and its volunteers bring a kind, gentle, and caring human face to the scene. I will never forget how they came to fetch my then elderly mother who had fallen and broken her hip. I was scared, as was my mom. They calmed both of us and made sure we felt like we were in angels’ hands. And we were.

Then there is the CSO, which quietly does whatever it has to in order for us to live secure and peaceful lives as Jews. Much of its work is behind the scenes, but it gives us the sense of security we have here in South Africa. CSO has long ensured our Jewish institutions, schools, and shuls are secure so we don’t have to stress about this.

This brings me to CAP, a non-profit community security organisation that was the brainchild of Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein in 2006. It was formed as a response to the surge in violent crime and its mission was to shift neighbourhood security to a proactive, intelligence-led crime-prevention infrastructure.

Astonishingly, in Houghton, it brought down serious criminal incidents from 126 a year before CAP was there to 11 in 2025. In Melrose and Birdhaven, contact crime reportedly fell from 114 incidents to just four. And so it goes on. It appears to me that the South African Police Service has come to trust and rely on the work CAP does to bring down and solve crime.

Another important communal organisation is the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, which makes sure that nobody messes with us and deals with any antisemitism up front and legally. I could go on about our varied and significant communal organisations.

We are pretty much self-sustaining, which puts us in a strong position as a community. My understanding is that we are admired by the Jewish world for this. While we dare not rest on our laurels, we can certainly be proud of what this small community has achieved in taking care of each other and ourselves.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor



Standing our ground 25 years after Durban hate fest

OPINION

MICHAEL KRANSDORFF



Twenty-five years ago this week, the traditionally laid-back coastal city of Durban became the epicentre of an organised international anti-Jewish hate campaign the likes of which had not been seen since the Holocaust – the infamous United Nations World Conference against Racism. Nine days later, on 9/11, the world would fix its gaze on the burning Twin Towers of Manhattan and call that the day everything changed. But for me, and a small band of fellow Jewish student activists, the implosion had already taken place two weeks before in Durban.

How could this happen at a major anti-racism conference held under the auspices of the most powerful human rights organisation in the world and hosted in a country that was the paragon of non-racism?

At the time, I was an executive member of the South African Union of Jewish Students, part of a generation that had come of age during what Francis Fukuyama called “the end of history”, when democracy seemed on an unstoppable march and antisemitism, the oldest hatred, was a relic swept into history’s dustbin. For South African Jews specifically, the “New South Africa” held the promise of a revival after decades of decline and isolation under apartheid.

Together with a handful of students from the World Union of Jewish Students, we would form part of the larger Jewish Caucus with leading Jewish human rights academics, activists, and leaders from around the world. The Jewish Caucus’s main aim in attending the United Nations (UN) Racism conference was to celebrate the strides we’d made in the fight against antisemitism.

There had been some red flags that Israel might come in for criticism over its handling of the then recently launched Palestinian Intifada. The final preparatory conference had been held in Tehran,

most of the world’s media on the ground, this could be an opportunity to debunk the big lie the conference was perpetuating and expose the true face of our detractors.

So, with the help of the resourceful Durban Jewish community, we printed and distributed within hours thousands of T-shirts with a proud Magen David on the front, calling on people to “Fight racism not Jews”. We worked through the night putting together pamphlets and posters to hand out, as the Israeli Foreign Ministry produced no hasbara material at the time. The climax of our campaign was a peace rally where, in a gesture of reconciliation, we even attempted to hand out flowers to our opponents.

Never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity, they responded with the most vile antisemitic abuse in full view of the press. So aggressive were they that police had to be called in to prevent us being lynched. That image of a handful of Jewish students, singing peace songs, being attacked by a large, angry mob at an anti-racism conference was broadcast on every major TV news channel and in hundreds of newspapers around the globe – the equivalent of going viral in a pre-social media world.

Durban was the harbinger of what was to come. The hatred we encountered there was only the tip of a much larger iceberg. Twenty-two years later, after 7 October, its full extent was revealed. Almost every major city in the West, and practically every major university campus, became its own Durban. The same T-shirts. The same chants. The same visceral Jew hatred.

The Durban strategy is to isolate Israel from the community of nations, to portray it as an apartheid and genocidal state, uniquely illegitimate, and, ultimately, as beyond the pale. For the 25 years since Durban, that campaign has seeped into NGOs, UN bodies, and Western universities, fuelled in part by Qatar’s vast investments in this project. South Africa, too, with its human rights halo, has played a particularly important legitimising role, culminating in its decision to place Israel in the dock at the International Court of Justice.

In the Book of Numbers, the pagan prophet Bilaam looks down upon the Jewish people and declares, “Behold, it is a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.”

For 25 years since Durban, we have watched as that prophecy has been turned into a political programme. And there is a real danger that we succumb to this fate.

“Dwell alone” cannot mean withdraw. Isolation cannot become our instinct. If we surrender the universities, the media, the cultural institutions, and the public square, we leave our enemies to define us.

That was the choice confronting the Jewish student delegation in Durban. We could have walked away. Instead, we stayed and confronted the lies. We did not change the minds of the mob but we changed the story that the world was watching.

Twenty-five years later, that is the lesson we need to remember. The answer to the curse of dwelling alone is not to pretend the hostility isn’t real. It is to refuse to let our enemies decide where we stand.

• Michael Kransdorff is the chairperson of the Jewish National Fund SA and was the SA Union of Jewish Students national treasurer and Wits political officer. For a deep dive into the Durban conference, listen to the podcast *Durban 2001: How Zionism became a Dirty word on Unpacking Israeli History?*



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How the last three years will influence young Israeli voters

OPINION PAULA SLIER

A 26-year-old lone soldier on reserve duty told me this week how he came to be serving in Gaza.

As a Jewish boy growing up in the United States, it was the kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit by Hamas in 2006 that left an imprint on his life, he said. He and his school friends wrote letters at the time to Israeli soldiers, thanking them for their service and wishing them well.

Almost two decades later, he found himself on the other side of that exchange. While serving, he received letters written by American Jewish youngsters to soldiers like him. One thanked him for risking his life for Israel.

There were tears in his eyes when he told me the story; there were tears in mine too.

I have thought about him while trying to understand how Israel’s younger generation is likely to vote next month. Around 640 000 Israelis aged 18 to 22 are eligible to vote for the first time, according to Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics, after almost three years in which 7 October, war, hostages, military service, and bereavement have shaped their lives.



Given what this generation has experienced, it is tempting to assume that the Hamas attack and the war that followed have pushed them decisively to the right, towards parties promising the toughest line on security.

But that explanation is too simple. Young Jewish Israelis were already moving right before 7 October. Academic research tracking Israeli attitudes over almost four decades found that, from the early 2000s onwards, younger Israeli Jews became increasingly more hawkish than older generations and more likely to identify with the right.

This isn’t a generation that grew up with the optimism surrounding the Oslo peace process. Its political memories were formed instead by the Second Intifada, rockets from Gaza, repeated rounds of fighting, and diminishing faith in a negotiated peace.

Then came 7 October.

The numbers bear out the broader rightward picture. In February, 75% of first-time voters surveyed by veteran pollster Midgam for Channel 12 identified as right-wing. Another survey the following month found 78% of 18- to 22-year-olds placing themselves on the right or centre-right. The polls asked the question differently, but the direction is difficult to miss.

So I don’t think the story of this election is simply that 7 October turned young Israelis into right-wing voters. Many were already there. The more interesting question is whether 7 October is changing what it means to be on the Israeli right.

A young Likud supporter I spoke with sees the shift in simpler terms. He says that after what Hamas did on 7 October, neither he nor his friends believe the old assumptions about peace. For them, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir’s appeal is precisely that he sounds uncompromising.

But another reservist I spoke to, who works closely with young Israelis preparing for military service, described something more complicated. While he too sees a generation deeply hawkish on security, many soldiers and reservists,

he says, are furious with the government over the failures surrounding 7 October and the continuing military-service exemptions for ultra-Orthodox men.

Becoming more hawkish doesn’t necessarily mean becoming more supportive of Netanyahu. A young Israeli can move further right on security while moving away from the political leadership that was in power on 7 October.

Where young voters ultimately land is still unclear, but the choices now available to them illustrate how much the old political map is shifting.

Gadi Eisenkot is one example. The former Israel Defense Forces chief of staff, who joined Israel’s emergency war Cabinet after 7 October, now leads the centrist Yashar party. His 25-year-old son, Gal, died fighting in Gaza in December 2023, and two nephews have also been killed in the war. He has made universal military, national, or civil service central to his political platform.

Many of the young Israelis I spoke with said they’ll vote for Eisenkot, attracted by his security credentials, criticism of Netanyahu, and demand for accountability over 7 October. This doesn’t mean there is a youth surge towards Eisenkot, and polling doesn’t show one. But his recent rise among the electorate demonstrates that being hawkish on security and opposing Netanyahu are no longer necessarily contradictory positions.

There are new choices on the right too. Former Brigadier-General Ofer Winter launched his People of Israel party in late August, offering another explicitly hawkish alternative. Israel’s right has long been politically fragmented, but this election is producing new alternatives for voters who remain firmly hawkish while dissatisfied with the existing leadership. Increasingly, the argument is not simply between right and left, but over what kind of right should govern Israel after 7 October.

Young Israelis also appear determined to participate in the elections. An Israel Democracy Institute study in May found that 82% of first-time voters believed their vote could influence what happens in Israel. That doesn’t sound like an apathetic generation to me.

Which brings me back to the young soldier. He told me there was nowhere he’d rather have been during the war than in Gaza. Yet, after everything he’s been through, he isn’t entirely sure how he feels about Israel or whether he wants to live here. For now, he’s going back to America to get his head sorted out and decide what he wants to do with the rest of his life.

I suspect there is something of his generation in that contradiction. Young Israelis can be fiercely committed to Israel’s security and deeply disillusioned with those responsible for delivering it. They can believe 7 October destroyed old assumptions about Hamas and peace, while demanding accountability for how it was allowed to happen. They can move right without moving towards Netanyahu, or reject Netanyahu without moving left.

Perhaps that is what 7 October has changed. For this generation, being tough on security may no longer be enough. The politicians competing for their votes will also have to convince them they can keep Israel safe, take responsibility when they fail, and ask everyone to share the burden of defending it.

The question isn’t whether young Israelis are moving right. It is what they now expect the right to deliver.

• Paula Sliver is a veteran journalist and foreign correspondent who has reported from conflict zones across the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. She writes about media, geopolitics, and information warfare.



The menu costs of global antisemitism

OPINION BENJI SHULMAN



Savvy consumers among *SA Jewish Report* readers will no doubt be familiar with a phenomenon that occurs during periods of higher prices and inflation. Your local restaurant may take some time before raising the prices on your favourite burger. However, once inflation subsides, restaurateurs don’t always bring those prices down again quite so quickly.

This behaviour is what economists call “menu costs”. The term refers metaphorically to the printing, design, and other costs that a theoretical restaurant incurs when changing the prices on its menu. Because changing prices itself carries a cost, the restaurant may wait before raising them during inflation and then wait again before lowering them once inflation subsides. In the actual economy, menu costs refer to the costs and difficulties associated with adjusting systems, prices, and supply chains to changing economic conditions.

For the past quarter of a century, world Jewry has endured a creeping rise in global “antisemitic inflation”. Every bout of hostilities since the Second Lebanon War has driven it higher, sustained by the ongoing efforts of groups such as the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement.

Work by organised Jewish communities and their allies, diplomatic successes by Israel such as the Abraham Accords, and external events such as the Arab Spring helped slow things down. After 7 October, however, the world entered a period of antisemitic hyperinflation that has yet to return to pre-7 October levels. We are now beginning to see the resulting menu costs take hold.

Take a relatively trivial example: the attempted boycott of Israel at Eurovision. When Israel won the competition in 2018, calls were immediately made to pressure European broadcasters and governments to boycott the following year’s event, including an appeal signed by around 140 artists. There were numerous protests, but ultimately the initiative failed.

Several years later, however, Ireland withdrew from the contest over Israel’s participation, followed by several other countries, including Spain and the Netherlands. While no further countries may withdraw, the likelihood of those that have left returning quickly is also small. Eurovision continues to face anti-Israel initiatives.

Eurovision now has a new menu cost when it comes to Israel.

The same principle applies to almost any institution, whether it’s a book club, the University of Cape Town, or even a supranational organisation like the United Nations (UN). Once an institution has shifted its position, reversing that change requires another expenditure of political, social, or reputational capital.

The biggest and potentially most important increase in these antisemitic menu costs, however, may be occurring in the United States’s Democratic Party. The primary process in the run-up to this year’s midterm elections has produced a plethora of candidates associated with the Democratic Socialists of America, both for Congress and the Senate, inspired by Zohran Mamdani’s successful campaign for mayor of New York.

Many of these candidates have expressed views that are implacably anti-Israel, sympathetic towards Iran, hostile towards traditional American foreign policy, and, in some cases, downright anti-Jewish. Depending on how the elections unfold in November, American Jews may find themselves dealing with a new menu cost embedded within the country’s political structures.

In South Africa, meanwhile, we face perhaps the ultimate menu cost: the application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The case has become a major obstacle in relations between Israel and South Africa, while simultaneously giving antisemites who wish to exclude Jews from social spaces an excuse to claim that they are merely following government policy.

The “genocide” narrative has come under considerable pressure from new information concerning the involvement of Hamas members in international news organisations and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, new food data challenging allegations of famine, and a range of other disputed data points. As a result, countries involved in the case, such as Ireland, have even begun to argue for a lower threshold in determining genocidal intent in the case against Israel.

The proceedings are moving so slowly that the case is likely to be resolved only sometime in the 2030s. Even if the factual basis of the case weakens, the political composition and legal approach of the ICJ mean that an adverse judgment remains possible.

Such an outcome could become the modern equivalent of the UN’s infamous 1975 “Zionism is racism” resolution, which helped provide the intellectual and political basis for many of the racism accusations Israel still faces today. That resolution was eventually, and unusually, repealed.

A genocide judgment would be far more difficult to undo. It would tarnish Israel’s image internationally and could damage its relationships with partners in parts of Europe and potentially North America. Unlike a political resolution, a judgment of the world’s highest international court cannot simply be repealed by another vote.

The menu cost could therefore be global and effectively permanent.

So what can be done about menu costs?

Returning to our restaurant analogy, once prices have risen, they generally come down only when the conditions that produced the inflation have receded. The retailer has limited control over those external conditions. Yet even when inflation falls, there remains an incentive to keep prices where they are. What eventually forces them down is pressure from customers and the threat that those customers will go elsewhere.

The political equivalent requires two things. Pro-Israel forces need to be organised, properly resourced, and willing to challenge institutions that have been affected by the anti-Israel agenda. They also need to be able to take advantage of the broader political environment to move in their favour.

South Africa is currently in an unusual position because some of the major drivers of our “antisemitic inflation” may be beginning to recede.



That Jewish Family finds a spirit of unity in SA

CLAUDIA GROSS

For a family that’s travelled to more than 30 countries, South Africa had to offer something special to leave an impression. Daniel and Raizel Namdar, the Chabad couple behind the social media platform That Jewish Family, weren’t disappointed.

The Namdars have built an international following by documenting their lives as an observant Jewish family travelling the world. Their content explores Jewish practice, family life, Chassidic Judaism, and the experience of maintaining Jewish traditions in different countries.

Daniel, who grew up in Sweden as the son of Chabad emissaries, initially began creating short videos about the weekly Torah portion. Australian-born Raizel later joined him, and the couple developed That Jewish Family into a broader platform about Jewish life and travel.

The family had wanted to visit South Africa for some time. Raizel’s sister, Chanchi Malka, and her husband, Rabbi Chezki Malka, live in Cape Town and run a Chabad house for tourists and the Israeli community.

“There wasn’t a specific Chabad house for tourists and there’s thousands of Jewish tourists a year,” Raizel said. “So, they opened that three years ago and we always felt bad that we hadn’t visited them and we’re travelling around the world, but not to them yet.”

The couple found out about the Chabad house a year before travelling to South Africa, but didn’t tell the family of their plan to visit. “And the surprise worked,” Raizel said.

One of the most memorable moments of their visit came at the top of Table Mountain, where Daniel blew a shofar. “That was beautiful,” Raizel said. “I think Table Mountain really deserves more attention.”

Going up in the cable car was an experience in itself for their children. “They loved it though,” Raizel said. “It was like a ride for them.”

The children also enjoyed spending time with family in South Africa. The Namdars have lived a largely nomadic lifestyle, travelling between countries rather than maintaining a permanent home. For about three and a half years, they had no base. After Raizel became pregnant with their third child, they decided to settle in New York and travel from there.

New York gives the family access to a large Jewish community and convenient international travel connections. South Africa gave them an opportunity to experience Jewish communal life in a different setting.

A Friday night gathering at the Malkas’ home stands out for them. About 100 people attended, many of whom didn’t know each other before arriving. “I think seeing all the people coming from around the world to celebrate Jewish life in Cape Town,” Raizel said. “No one knew each other. But everyone came for the same reason, to celebrate and practise their Judaism.”



Screenshot from social media

The setting added to the experience. “It was beautiful with the ocean view. It was really nice.”

The Namdars were also struck by the infrastructure available to observant Jews in Cape Town. “I find it amazing that you guys have amazing infrastructure for Jewish people,” Raizel said. “The supermarkets are incredibly well stocked for anything kosher.” She was particularly impressed by the availability of kosher products at mainstream supermarkets. “You think you’re in New York with Checkers and Spar,” she said.

They also attended the Gardens Shul, spending Shabbat with Rabbi Oshi Feldman, Raizel’s uncle.

The SA Jewish Museum gave the family a chance to connect with an older chapter of Cape Town’s Jewish history. Raizel said she had heard about the site throughout her life and appreciated finally seeing it for herself. “It was incredible. It felt like stepping back into Europe.”

The family then travelled to the Kruger National Park area, staying at 18 on the Hill, a resort in the Masaki private reserve connected to the park that maintains a separate kosher kitchen. This allowed the Namdars to experience the bush without

compromising their religious requirements. “People don’t even know that it’s kosher,” Daniel said. “It’s one of these beautiful, upscale resorts that happen to have a separate kosher kitchen.”

The resort offers both kosher and non-kosher menus, with the aim of keeping the meals as similar as possible. “It was very cool,” Daniel said. The family also enjoyed kosher picnics during their game drives, including kosher wine and biltong.

Their first safari produced several memorable sightings, including two leopards.

The Namdars spent Shabbat at the resort, with a distinctly South African meal around a fire. “That place was magical,” Raizel said.

The family returned to New York with a strong impression of South Africa’s Jewish community. Daniel said Cape Town stood out for them. “I’ll just say this, that of all the places we’ve been to, there is a certain unity that you feel in the Jewish community in Cape Town that is very rare,” he said.

The family had received invitations to visit Johannesburg but decided against adding another stop after their time in the Kruger. Daniel said they had heard that Johannesburg, too, has an exceptional Jewish community, but travelling with young children made the additional leg of the trip difficult.

“I think everyone can learn from the unity that the South African Jewry has,” he said. “We’re all one nation with one father.”

He ended his message to South African Jews with a blessing for Rosh Hashanah. “Blessing everyone with a happy new year with the South African spirit of unity.”

New judges of the Achiever Awards

GILANA LAB

Six new judges have joined the 2026 Investec Jewish Achiever Awards panel, bringing different voices to the recognition of excellence, leadership, entrepreneurship, and contribution in the community.

Investec for Business head Anthony Meltzer and Phatudi Maponya, chief executive of Maponya Investment Holdings, join the judges of the Investec Business Icon Award, Investec Business Leadership Award, and Investec Professional Excellence Award.

Dis-Chem co-founder Lynette Saltzman joins the Europcar Women in Leadership Award panel, while Investec Business and Commercial Banking’s Greg Cline joins the Ichikowitz Family Foundation Rising Star Award.

Finally, advertising industry veteran Ann Nurock and Dis-Chem co-founder Ivan Saltzman join the Eric Ellerine Entrepreneur Award.

Meltzer says, “I was happy to become a judge due to Investec’s involvement, and this being an opportunity to be part of a process of recognising people who are making a meaningful contribution to both the Jewish community and broader South African society.”

“The Jewish Achiever Awards are important as they celebrate excellence, leadership, and impact, while also highlighting the resilience and contribution of our community. I’m honoured to contribute to the process and look forward to learning more about the nominees.”

For Maponya, being appointed a judge is “an honour and a privilege” and an opportunity to make a contribution to a community whose members have played a meaningful role in his life. He described former Wits lecturer Karen Lazar and Dr Jody Pearl as two “Jewish heroines”. Lazar gave him and 16 other African students free extra English classes in 1986, while Pearl was there for him years later when he suffered a stroke. “I am here today largely because of her quick intervention,” Maponya said.

Having attended the 2024 Jewish Achiever Awards, Maponya is interested in experiencing the judging side.

Together, Meltzer and Maponya will judge three Investec categories. The Investec Business Icon Award recognises seasoned, established, and iconic business leaders; the Investec Business Leadership Award recognises leadership and impact in business; and the Investec Professional Excellence Award honours those who have achieved national recognition in their profession.

Saltzman will judge the Europcar Women in Leadership Award, recognising a woman who has distinguished herself through leadership and achievement in business, public life, the arts, academia, or the community.

Cline joins the panel for the Ichikowitz Family Foundation Rising Star Award, recognising achievers aged 35 and younger who are showing promise and leadership.

Nurock and Saltzman will judge the Eric Ellerine Entrepreneur Award, which recognises innovation and resilience in entrepreneurship. For Nurock, joining the judging panel brings her relationship with the awards full circle. “I was honoured to be approached to be a judge, having won a Jewish Achiever Award about 300 years ago,” she joked, describing it as “probably one of the best nights of my life”.

“I understand the absolute privilege and honour it is to be nominated for this prestigious award, but to win it is quite something,” Nurock said. For her, the awards are also about a small community recognising its own. “The nominations come from our own community, the judges are from our own community, and the winners are from our own community. It really is a privilege.”

Behind the judging is a process designed to ensure that decisions are made fairly and on merit. It is independently audited by Garron Chaitowitz, audit partner at BDO South Africa.

The six new judges join the wider panel entrusted with selecting this year’s recipients ahead of the Investec Jewish Achiever Awards on 1 November.



Ann Nurock



Phatudi Maponya



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SA and Israeli students get up close and personal

OPINION

ANGIE SEGAL



There was never any expectation that a group of 21 Israelis and 30 South Africans would agree with each other. In fact, that would have made for a fairly pointless week. The point was to put them in the same room.

For five days in August we took young people from two countries, whose relationship has become increasingly defined by politics, and gave them the opportunity to do something remarkably simple: meet. Not through governments, headlines, social media, or carefully prepared talking points, but as people.



Together with Klaas Mokgomole, I led the delegation on behalf of the South African Zionist Federation, in partnership with Israeli organisation Nefesh Yehudi, and Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs. We spent weeks planning the programme. We knew where we wanted to take participants and what conversations we hoped to start. What we couldn't plan was what would happen once 51 very different young people actually got to know one another.

Israel and Zionism are discussed constantly in South Africa, particularly on university campuses. Too often, Israelis are spoken about as though they are one homogeneous group, with the same politics, experiences, and answers.

The 21 Israelis who came to Johannesburg showed

something far more human and far more interesting.

They brought different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. They spoke openly about Israel, the war, Palestinians, and the future they want for their country, while engaging honestly with South Africans who brought perspectives of their own.

There was no single "Israeli view" in the room. There were 21 young Israelis, each with their own story to tell.

And the questioning went both ways. The Israelis arrived with their own perceptions of South Africa and encountered a country far more complicated than any headline could explain.

In Soweto, they confronted the ramifications of apartheid first-hand while also discovering the footprints of Jews who played a role in the anti-apartheid struggle. In Braamfontein, they saw some of Johannesburg's enormous socio-economic challenges alongside the entrepreneurs and organisations working to find solutions. At the Jewish National Fund gardens in Mamelodi, they saw the impact agriculture can have on a community.

And in Diepsloot, some of the most thought-provoking questions of the entire week came from high school pupils. One 16-year-old asked, "If you take religion out of the Middle East, would there still be war?" It stopped the room.

Here was a teenager cutting straight through decades of politics, history, and conflict with a question nobody could answer neatly. Not every difficult question needs to be met with an immediate, rehearsed response. Sometimes it deserves to sit in the room for a while.

At the University of the Witwatersrand, around 60 additional students joined us for a leadership summit. South African and Israeli politics were put on the table, alongside questions of identity, inequality, history, leadership, and responsibility.

Nobody was given a script. Nobody was asked to defend every decision made by their government. And nobody had to leave having changed their mind. That mattered.

We talk a lot about "dialogue", but too often what we really mean is persuasion. We listen while waiting for our opportunity to respond. We enter conversations certain of

what we think and determined to leave just as certain.

We wanted something different. Understanding somebody doesn't require agreeing with them. Sometimes it simply requires enough curiosity to find out who they are and how they came to see the world as they do.

As important as the formal conversations were, some of the most meaningful parts of the week happened in between them: on bus rides and around dinner tables, through music, inside jokes, endless laughter, and an extraordinary amount of dancing.

The shift happened remarkably quickly.

The participants stopped choosing seats according to which delegation they belonged to and started choosing seats next to their friends. Conversations continued long after sessions ended. Music would come on and, inevitably, so would the dancing.

One of my favourite moments was taking the group to Orlando Stadium to watch Orlando Pirates play. There was no discussion topic, no facilitator, and no lesson attached to it. We simply took 21 Israelis to a South African football match and watched them throw themselves into it. They sang, cheered, and embraced the atmosphere, while the South Africans loved sharing something so uniquely ours with them. For those few hours, there was nothing to debate. They were simply a group of friends in a stadium shouting for the same team.

At dinner one evening, I looked around the room and realised just how much had changed. The tables were mixed, the conversations easy, and the laughter constant. "The Israelis" and "the South Africans" no longer seemed particularly useful ways of describing them. They had

names now. For me, that is where the real value of a delegation like this lies. Once somebody has a name, a personality, a sense of humour, and a story, it becomes much harder to reduce them to a label.

Our goal was never to create 30 new spokespeople for Israel. We weren't there to hand South African students talking points or send them home agreeing with everything they had heard.

We wanted them to know the people behind the story. So when one of those South African students next hears Israel or Israelis reduced to a slogan or stereotype, there is now someone attached to it. A face. A voice. A conversation. An inside joke. A friend.

The same is true in reverse. South Africa is no longer simply a country the Israelis know through politics and headlines. It is filled with people they know. They have walked through Soweto and Braamfontein, planted alongside people in Mamelodi, been challenged by students in Diepsloot, and stood in Orlando Stadium cheering for the Buccaneers.

Neither group left agreeing on everything. That was never the measure of success.

By the time we said goodbye, there were long hugs, WhatsApp groups buzzing, and, yes, a few tears. More tellingly, there were already conversations about when they would see one another again.

For all the weeks we spent planning this delegation, that was the one thing we could never have put on the itinerary.

And that was the whole point.
• Angie Segal is head of media at the South African Zionist Federation.



Four Jewish artists making their mark on Johannesburg

CLAUDIA GROSS

What happens when an art festival asks visitors to leave the gallery behind and explore Johannesburg through the people who make its art? That's the idea behind Contra Joburg, which returned on 29 and 30 August, for its fifth year. More than 170 artists and makers took part across 16 creative spaces in the inner city, Braamfontein, and Rosebank.

Instead of gathering everything in one exhibition hall, Contra takes visitors into working studios, galleries, heritage buildings, and other creative spaces.

Among the Jewish participants were artists Candice Kramer, Gail Behrmann, and Bev Butkow, as well as gallerist and curator Candice Berman.

Their practices are very different, but their work shares a strong connection with Johannesburg and its communities.

For Kramer, Johannesburg is both a place of personal history and a source of artistic material. The Johannesburg-born artist works from Bag Factory Artists' Studios in Fordsburg. She explores memory, movement, and belonging through family photographs, archival maps, and images of pedestrians. She works on industrial materials such as steel, copper, and pewter, using rust and corrosion to create textured surfaces.

"My work is very much about Johannesburg and my connection to Johannesburg," Kramer said. She is

particularly interested in the contrast between her background and the community around her studio. "I am fascinated with my connection to



One of Bev Butkow's artworks

Johannesburg as a white Jewish female living in northern suburbs Johannesburg and working at Bag Factory," she said.

Her Jewish upbringing has influenced the way she relates to other people, even when it's not directly visible in her artwork, she said. She doesn't work on Shabbat, but her studio was open during Contra because other people work there.

She said Jewish values around "valuing and seeing the goodness in people" have helped her connect with artists from different backgrounds at Bag Factory. Kramer has participated in Contra since its inception. She said the festival has grown from an effort to connect Johannesburg's creative spaces into a two-day event that allows visitors to

experience areas they may not normally visit.

She particularly values the way visitors can enter artists' studios and see work in progress. "It's enlightening," she said. "People have come back year after year to my studio to see what's new and what I'm making this year."

Behrmann also works at Bag Factory and has participated in Contra since it began. Her practice centres on abstract painting, with the South African landscape, poetry, music, and nature among her influences.

Behrmann paints while listening to music, particularly classical music. She plans her abstract paintings before beginning them and continues to draw from life because she believes drawing is "really learning to see".

Classical Chinese Tang poetry is another important influence. Behrmann takes a line from a poem and considers it in relation to nature before planning a painting. The poems often explore war, longing, love, landscape, and nature.

Her approach leaves the meaning of the finished work open to viewers. "I want them to take away whatever they feel," Behrmann said. "I don't like to interpret to them. They should interpret themselves."

Butkow's journey into art followed a different route. She previously worked in corporate finance, but gradually moved towards art after taking painting lessons. She began exploring different materials and techniques, eventually developing a practice across painting, textiles, and installation. Weaving, knotting, binding, and repair are central to her work.

"I like working with mixed mediums and mixed techniques," Butkow said. "It helps me think in different ways." She is

particularly drawn to weaving because of its physical and repetitive qualities. "Weaving is like breathing," she said. "It's like in and out, in and out, and over and under."

Butkow's work is closely tied to Johannesburg. Her childhood memories include her grandfather selling eggs at the fresh produce market, buying her matric dance dress at the Oriental Plaza, and going to the movies at the Carlton Centre.

Her studios have remained in central Johannesburg because she believes artists need to remain connected to the realities of the city. She described Johannesburg as a city of migrants and people trying to make their way. Its contradictions, changes, and resilience have become part of her artistic thinking.

Her Jewish upbringing is also reflected in her practice. Butkow said education, family, community, and relationships were among the strongest values she was raised with. She said she doesn't always make her Jewish identity explicit in her art. However, she sees it as inseparable from who she is and therefore from what she creates.

Berman is a gallerist, curator, and art adviser who began her career as an artist. She established Candice Berman Gallery in



One of Candice Kramer's pieces

Johannesburg in 2013 and now runs two gallery platforms.

Her Johannesburg gallery is based at 223 Jan Smuts Creative Hub in Rosebank.

The space includes The Creatory, an artist residency that gives selected artists free working space for several months. Berman said she is drawn to artists with "a unique signature style" that cannot easily be duplicated. She is particularly interested in expressive work that reflects the psychology of its maker.

She sees Contra as part of Johannesburg's growing art scene and believes the festival offers something different from a conventional gallery. "I think you get to get an insight into what happens behind the scenes or the maker's process," she said.

For Berman, that process matters because audiences can see how artists work rather than only encountering completed pieces. That approach is central to Contra. It provides a way for audiences to enter creative spaces and meet the people behind the work.

Kramer said community is one of the things she values most about the art world. "It can only be good for all of us and all of our careers," she said of giving South African artists greater exposure.



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What happens when retirement lasts for decades?

CLAUDIA GROSS

Retirement is often treated as a finish line. But for people who live into their 90s or beyond, it can mark the beginning of several decades without a salary.

For some, that means careful financial planning.

For others, it means continuing to work for as long as possible. And for many, it means learning how to replace the structure, purpose, social interaction, and financial independence that a job once provided.

Hilly Picker is 100 years old and has been retired for about 30 years, while Joel Marx continued working until the age of 87. A former teacher in Johannesburg, who asked not to be named, retired

nine years ago due to age limits in the profession.

Their experiences show that preparing for a long life involves more than saving enough money. It also means thinking about health, housing, relationships, purpose, and how to spend the years after formal employment ends.

Picker says he hasn't had major financial concerns during his three

in electronics before moving into farming. He continued working to an extent after retiring.

Today, he lives in Cape Town and remains active. He walks twice a day, meets people, and spends time at restaurants and a clubhouse. "I can't say I'm bored."

For Picker, staying active is central to ageing well. "As far as I'm concerned, I feel quite strong and healthy. You've got to keep yourself busy at all times and you must relax. You've got to find something to do," he says.

His experience highlights an important part of retirement planning that cannot be measured in rands. People need to consider how they'll spend their time once work no longer structures their days.

After decades in the family business, Marx found himself with more time than he knew how to use. "After working under pressure for so many years and never having enough time, I've got too much time on my hands and it is depressing in a way," he says.

Marx's retirement came after the closure of K Marx Curtain Specialists, a family business established by his father, Kurt Marx, in 1936. The

business was initially based in Loveday Street in central Johannesburg. Marx grew up around the business and eventually joined it formally in 1956 at the age of 20, trained from the bottom up by his parents. "There were no shortcuts," he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

The business grew, but so did its costs. Marx says his family raised and educated three children on a "very meagre turnover". Although the currency was stronger and many basic expenses were considerably lower, he says the situation changed rapidly. "It became much more difficult to make a living."

The business later expanded to a Rosebank branch, which was run by his wife, Irene, and a friend, Mary Kahlberg. The branch continued until 1994, when the Mews building was demolished. The family eventually moved from central Johannesburg and bought premises in Glenhazel. Despite changing shopping patterns and the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the business survived through its reputation and word of mouth.

It finally closed towards the end of 2025, when Marx was almost 88 and had developed macular degeneration. He says if it weren't for his impaired vision, "I would probably find something which I would be able and capable of doing".

Marx believes many older people are forced into retirement despite still having valuable knowledge and experience. In his view, many people remain willing and able to work, but are required to leave because of their age.

The retired teacher knows what it's like to leave working life before you're ready. She taught at a Jewish pre-school and was required to retire at 65. She was subsequently given contracts for a number of years, before eventually leaving the workforce. "I felt like I was still in my best years of teaching," she says.

Retirement brought a sense of loss. "I also miss the financial independence," she says. She and her husband have savings and investments and meet with a financial adviser every year. Her husband is also approaching retirement, and the couple will increasingly rely on their accumulated finances. While she isn't anxious about their financial future, retirement has changed her spending habits. She now distinguishes between what she needs and what she wants.

The two also have to consider their home. She says a house is often one of the main assets people have when they reach retirement. Selling, downsizing, or moving into a retirement facility can therefore become part of later-life financial planning. The former teacher isn't yet ready to leave her home. She values having space for family and a garden, but recognises that circumstances may eventually change.

She attends a crochet group, does pottery, goes to gym, and does water aerobics twice a week. These activities give her exercise, social interaction, and a reason to leave the house. She advises younger people to start developing interests before they retire. "Work as long as you can and while you are working, develop personal interests," she says.

She recommends reading, gardening, crafts, golf, card games, and other activities that can provide structure. "The day is very long if you don't have your own personal interests."

Financial preparation remains essential. Marx acknowledges that saving can be difficult when the cost of living rises faster than salaries. "[With] today's prices, it's not very easy for the average man in the street to provide too much for retirement."

But he believes people must still make provisions for their later years.

The experiences of Picker, Marx, and the retired teacher suggest that financial longevity isn't simply about accumulating enough money to stop working. It's about preparing for a potentially long period when income, health, housing, relationships, and daily routines may change.

Retirement may be unavoidable. But planning for it can begin long before the final working day.

And as Picker's 100 years demonstrate, the question isn't only whether you can afford to retire. It's whether you can afford to live well after you do.



Photo: pexels.com



decades of retirement. "That's just pretty good. We have no complaints," he says. Picker worked

The songs Hashem put in Yeshiva girls' hearts

GILANA LAB

What happens when teenage girls are given a stage not simply to perform, but to express the things they may not know how to say aloud? That idea lies at the heart of Yeshiva College Girls High School's *Heart Songs*.

The musical production encourages pupils to explore the experiences that shape them, recognise the struggles others may be carrying, and, ultimately, discover the unique "song" Hashem has placed within each of them.

Director and producer Shaynah

Crouse said the production was created collaboratively with the girls, who wrote pieces drawn from real-life challenges, hopes, aspirations, and ideals. "They have shared the responsibility of telling each other's stories," she said, using the production to bring into the open thoughts and feelings that people so often keep internalised.

The intention wasn't simply to put difficult emotions on stage, but to create something in which others could recognise themselves and feel "a sense of acceptance, shared experience, and that no one ever needs to feel vulnerable and alone".

For Crouse, this is what makes a school production valuable long before the curtain rises. "A show is about so much more than entertaining an audience," she said. "It's a platform to make real connections that will affect and inspire others."

In fact, she believes that "the process is more important than the outcome". Through creating *Heart Songs*, the girls have grown, gained confidence, and experienced the sense of achievement that comes from finding and fulfilling their own unique purpose.

In *Heart Songs*, the girls confront issues that are part of growing up, including friendship, belonging, self-image, expectations, uncertainty, and the pressure to fit in. These aren't presented simply as abstract teenage struggles. Many of the ideas grew out of the girls' own experiences and the things they wanted to express.

For pupil Leora Dembo, taking part changed the way she thinks about the people around her. "You never truly know what someone is going through," she said. "Everyone is going through their own struggles and the most important thing is to be kind and not judge as we will never know what it's like to be them."

For her, *Heart Songs* became "so much more" than a school play because of the reality of what the girls were exploring.

It's a sentiment echoed by Liya Radomsky. "I truly believe that

everyone has something in their heart that they want to share but are often too afraid to," she said. "This whole production is made up of little parts of each and every one of us."

The experience also made her think differently about the characteristics people sometimes wish they could change about themselves. "Those differences are what make us unique, and they're something we should celebrate, not hide."

That willingness to be vulnerable is central to what Yeshiva College Girls High School principal Rebbetzin Natalie Altman hoped the production would give the pupils. Having heart, she said, means being wholehearted and having "the courage to be joyful, truthful, vulnerable, and authentic".

"We want every girl to know that who she is matters, that her voice matters, and that her unique gifts have a place in this world," she said.

But the idea of finding your own voice in *Heart Songs* goes deeper than self-acceptance. At its centre is the relationship between the individual and Hashem. Altman said song is one of the greatest expressions of that relationship because it can communicate what ordinary words sometimes cannot.

"We sing when we rejoice, we sing when we grieve, and we sing when words alone are no longer enough," she said. "Music reaches places that ordinary conversation cannot."

Yet, she said, the production is "about even more than music. It is about discovering our own unique song."

Drawing on the teachings of Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, Altman said one of life's greatest callings is discovering "the unique song of our own soul". As a person grows, that song can expand beyond the individual to embrace the Jewish people and humanity, and ultimately become part of their service of Hashem.

It's an idea that pupil Liya Perez came to understand through being part of the production. Everyone,

she said, is fighting battles that often cannot be seen, but even in those moments, there are people willing to lift you up. And beyond them is the knowledge that "Hashem will always be guiding and lifting us up" and helping each person connect with the "unique and meaningful songs that He has placed within each of our hearts".

Ultimately, *Heart Songs* doesn't ask its girls to have everything figured out. Instead, it gives them permission to acknowledge what they're carrying, to listen to one another without judgement, and to recognise that being different doesn't mean being out of place.

It asks them to find the song Hashem has placed within them, have the courage to sing it, and trust that it was put there for a reason.



Sara Seeff and Olivia Rubenstein in *Heart Songs*



Performing in *Heart Songs*

Helping children through their trauma

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

A child's trauma often has a ripple effect, shaping their behaviour, relationships, and sense of safety, and impacting the classroom and home environment. As we face communal and individual challenges, understanding how trauma can manifest in children and how best to help them navigate the fallout is vital.

This was discussed in a recent webinar led by Torah Academy in partnership with Beis Yaakov, Hirsch Lyons, King David Schools, Maharsha, Shaarei Torah, the Mesorah School, Sandton Sinai, and Yeshiva College.

"One thing common to each of us is the emotional well-being of our children," said Torah Academy managing director Rabbi Yossi Liberow, explaining the thinking behind hosting a collaborative event.

"Trauma and adversity don't stay contained. They show up in the classroom, in our homes, in our friendships, and in the child who's struggling." How we respond to a child's trauma can make the difference between a child who feels held and one who feels alone, he said.

Explaining the concept of trauma, Carin Marcus, a clinical social worker and logotherapist specialising in grief and loss, said its impact goes beyond a specific experience. "It's a psychological and emotional response to an experience, about what happens inside the body as a result of that experience," she said.

"Not every person responds in the same way to the same experience." Trauma is also not always a single event like a crime or a loss; it can also be a result of something ongoing like recurrent bullying or helping a loved one through a prolonged illness.

The often-hidden nature of trauma is a significant challenge, Marcus said. While we may recognise that someone is sad, angry, or quiet, we often don't know the underlying causes. "What we're really speaking to are the invisible layers of what people are holding and carrying," Marcus said.

This invisibility is especially relevant to children, who may not have the vocabulary or understanding to express what's making them behave a certain way. "It's a sudden clinginess, fear of separating, difficulty concentrating, regressive behaviours where a child tends to cut back on things that they've already mastered. Often, children struggle to regulate their feelings if they're living in a traumatised situation. There's so much going on inside of them."

Rather than asking what's wrong, Marcus advised, ask what's happening, what's really going on in that child's world – what's behind their behaviour? Yet, when we ourselves are in a state of trauma, too, it's not always easy to recognise this and respond appropriately.

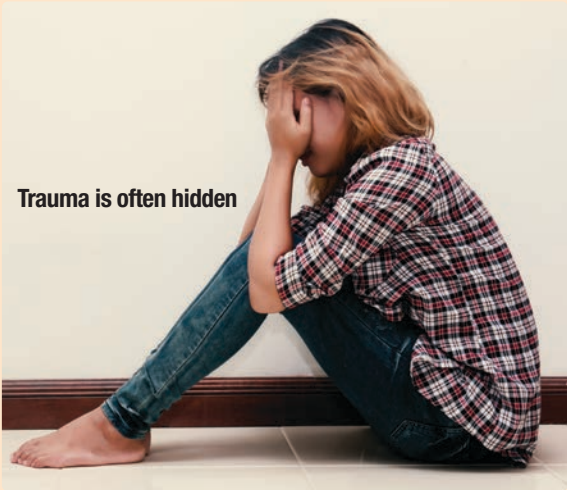
Therein lies the importance of community, she said, using the analogy of a dartboard, where the rings outside the bullseye speak to our proximity to the trauma. "There's something so uniquely beautiful about our community," she said, "in that no matter what the trauma is, we are all somewhere on that dartboard. We hold each other's space and each other's trauma in that we all share a deep responsibility for each other."

"A trauma-informed Jewish community transforms that responsibility into everyday acts of compassion, understanding without judgement, and connection," she said. This ability to be there for each other is where resilience is born.

United States-based Rabbi Yakov Horowitz, an author, educator, parent mentor, and child-safety advocate, tackled what to say – and what not to say – to a child facing trauma. "How do we create an environment where the child feels comfortable being honest with us?" he asked. Ultimately, it's about being authentic because children are far more perceptive than we realise. Showing sincerity and empathy is key.

"They're not necessarily coming to you to solve that problem," Horowitz said. "They first just want to be heard and understood. Often, the most therapeutic thing you can do is to be calm and provide a listening ear."

He stressed the importance of reading the room and understanding what children really want to talk about. "They'll often parcel what they want to talk about in little pieces and gauge your response to smaller issues. They're not going to tell you everything right away because they want to feel comfortable that you're really someone they can talk to." Becoming a safe space for



them comes with being approachable and sometimes sharing your own vulnerability, which often makes people much more inclined to talk.

Horowitz also spoke of children and adolescents within

religious communities being afraid to share a crisis of faith that sometimes results from trauma. "It's so important that we don't express shock or disappointment. To the contrary, tell them it's normal to feel this way if they're going through difficult times. You can't help a child have a conversation if they're afraid to have it with you."

If there's something serious at play, like self-harm, suicidal thoughts, or abuse, you need to contact a professional, he said.

"It's our job to love our children and to support them no matter what. It's important to teach them that there's no right or wrong way to handle trauma, we should be able to be there to support them through it all."

Discussing moving forward from trauma, Rabbi Levi Avtzon, educator and rabbi of Linksfeld Shul, stressed the importance of finding a positive way to channel it. Often, when we talk about trauma, we talk about healing it as if it's a headache, something you get rid of by taking

a tablet, he said. "I don't ask the deeper meaning of the headache. I just want to be healed. Trauma shouldn't be considered a headache. It's not something to just get through."

Trauma is an energy, he said. "It shakes us. It startles us. At the time, it overwhelms us. Death can feel like somebody ripped a piece of our heart out. Other traumas might have a different feeling. But at some stage, whether it's a month or even five years later, I cannot only heal from it; I have to channel it, because otherwise that energy is wasted." You have agency over what you decide to do with your trauma, he said.

That is not to minimise its impact, which is sometimes eternal, but at some stage every trauma can be channelled, he said, if we turn to G-d and ask what He wants from us. "Something good can come out of every pain we've been through. Something can and must be built. Not only for the sake of the world, but for our own sake. Ask, 'How can I make this world a little more whole from the hole in my heart?'"

A world record 48 hours of non-stop padel

GILANA LAB

For two and a half days, Greg Gogoski didn't sleep. By the final hours, the man who had worked in the padel industry for three years was so exhausted that he had to remind himself how the game worked.

Yet, at 16:00 on Sunday 23 August, Gogoski and three others completed 48 consecutive hours of padel, breaking the Guinness World Record of roughly 41 hours. Setting the new record with him were Lara Anderson, Warren Kuhn, and Farhaan "Fudgie" Sayanwala.

For Gogoski – a former King David pupil who literally works, lives, and plays padel, being an operations manager for a padel company – the challenge was to discover how far they could push themselves.

"From the beginning, it was always to see how far we could push ourselves and to see how much stronger the mind is than the body," he said. "We knew it would mainly be a mental challenge."

As plans developed, the four decided their attempt should stand for something beyond breaking a record. They used it to raise funds and awareness for the South African Depression and Anxiety Group in memory of Muhammad "Mo" Abba, a regular at 10by20 KCC Padel Club who had died after battling depression. "He would play almost every night at our club," Gogoski said. "He was a young guy, a good-looking guy, and unfortunately lost the battle with depression."

The public fundraiser brought in more than R11 000 from the padel community, in addition to a number of private donations.

On preparing for 48 hours of continuous padel,

Gogoski said, "It's very hard to train for as any long stint requires quite a lot of rest and recovery afterwards. The team therefore trained strategically, completing eight- and 12-hour stints."

Yet, they knew there was no real way to prepare for what would happen beyond a full day without sleep. "It was nerve-racking because we knew we were going into almost uncharted waters when we got to the 24-hour-plus mark," he said.

Once the attempt began on Friday 21 August, the scale of what they were attempting became apparent. Under the rules, the players were allowed just five minutes of rest for every hour played. Those minutes could be banked and accumulated, but otherwise they had to keep playing.

Fatigue began setting in from about 12 hours, accompanied by muscle spasms, foot cramps, tennis elbow, blisters, wrist pain, and exhaustion. For Gogoski, the hardest part was sleep deprivation. "I've been telling people afterwards that it was the best and the worst experience of my life," he said. "It was a lot harder than I think we all thought it was going to be. Hard on the body, hard on the mind."

Sunday morning brought the lowest point. Having started on Friday afternoon, they had been playing for well over a day when, between about 04:00 and 10:00, the drowsiness became particularly intense.

"The team definitely went through a few rough

patches," Gogoski said. "Sunday morning was the hardest part. I knew we were all going to get over the line, but definitely some doubts started to creep in."

Eventually, they reached the roughly 41-hour mark and matched the world record. But instead of slowing down, the significance of every additional minute became motivation to keep going. "We knew every minute we completed now becomes a harder challenge for someone to break," Gogoski said. "It really was just pushing as hard as possible to protect the record."

By the final couple of hours, sleep deprivation had taken its toll. "To be honest, I kind of lost my marbles," Gogoski said. "I had to remind myself how the game of padel works, how it scores, and this is someone who's been in the padel industry for three years."

At that point, there was little thought of strategy. "I was just trying to hit the ball over the net."

Finally, at 16:00 on Sunday, the four reached 48 hours.

"When 48 hours crossed, it was more relief than anything that I could go and rest my brain," Gogoski said. "I was super happy that the team got over the line."

What began as an attempt to test the limits of their mental and physical endurance had ended seven hours beyond the previous record, while raising money and awareness for a cause close to their padel community.



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SA-born duo ready for Israel’s Pickleball World Cup

CLAUDIA GROSS

Tanya Silverman and Janine Berzen are still pinching themselves after winning gold at an international pickleball tournament in Vietnam. The South African-born pair danced and sang on the podium after taking first place in the over-60 women’s doubles 3.5 division while representing Team Israel.

“We were so excited that we actually won the finals,” said Silverman. “We have to pinch ourselves that we won gold.”

The tournament was held ahead of the 2026 Pickleball World Cup, which begins on Friday in Vietnam and in which Silverman and Berzen are also set to compete.

Their partnership has developed around an understanding of each other’s game, built through regular play and training. “We have the most amazing chemistry,” said Silverman. “We can be totally honest with each other.”

Berzen plays on the right side of the court, while Silverman plays on the left. Berzen said she sets Silverman up to play the ball, while Silverman creates pressure and takes opportunities when they arise. “We just know,” said Silverman. “She knows when to leave a ball for me, I know when to leave balls for her.”

They also emphasised the importance of encouraging each other when mistakes happen. “There’s no apologies or anything like that,” Silverman said. “We all make mistakes. We pump each other up.”

Their preparation began several weeks before the tournament. The Israeli team trained together twice a week for about three to four weeks, working with two coaches who provided guidance and introduced specific shots and exercises.

The women also continued playing their regular social games and practised with the partners they would have in the tournament. Silverman added her own fitness programme to the preparation. She exercises almost every day, including weight training, high-intensity exercise, and squats.

Berzen plays pickleball two or three times a week and does some additional workouts. Both women work full-time, meaning their pickleball preparation has to fit around their professional and home lives.

Silverman is a senior tour operator in Tel Aviv, working with pilgrim groups visiting Israel, arranging bookings, itineraries, hotels, and travel requirements. Berzen is a paralegal for a patent attorneys’ company. Her work includes filings in Israel and the United States.

Their sporting careers began long before pickleball. Both are former tennis players, and their South African upbringing played a significant role in their relationship with sport. “We were brought up, we lived there for so many years before we made aliya, and it was all about sports,” Berzen said.

Silverman said she has played tennis since she was young and also played squash. She described sport as a strong part of her family background, with her father and other family members having been top tennis players in South Africa. One of her cousins played mixed doubles at Wimbledon in the 1950s. “I was brought up on the tennis

courts,” she said.

The pair also believe their South African upbringing influenced their approach to competition. “We grew up tough in South Africa,” Silverman said.

Their moves to Israel gave both women a new sporting route. Berzen had continued playing squash after making aliya, before a fellow squash player introduced her to pickleball. Silverman turned to pickleball after experiencing a tennis calf injury. She discovered the new sport while scrolling on Facebook and later took lessons.

Pickleball is a paddle sport that has some similarities to tennis. It is played on a smaller court and uses a paddle and a perforated plastic ball. The sport has grown internationally and offers competitive divisions based on



age and playing ability.

For Silverman and Berzen, the latest tournament has provided another opportunity to represent Israel while maintaining a connection to their South African past.

They are not the only South African-born players competing for Israel. The women mentioned fellow South African-Israeli player Martin Stein, who won a bronze medal in his division at the tournament.

The Israeli pickleball community is relatively small, although the women said the sport is growing. Israel entered the Pickleball World Cup for only the second time this year. The international tournament in Vietnam therefore carried significance for the Israeli team. “It’s not the World Cup per se, but

it’s an international tournament and it’s still a big deal,” Silverman said.

The gold medal has not ended their tournament schedule. Silverman and Berzen will continue playing together when the World Cup begins, and expect the competition to be considerably tougher.

The World Cup’s over-60 category is not restricted to the 3.5 rating level used in their international tournament. They could face players with ratings of 5.2 or 5.5, including highly experienced and professional-level competitors. “We’re ready,” Berzen said. “We’re ready for action.”

The pair said their success is part of a wider group effort by Israeli players. During their time in Vietnam, they supported South African players they encountered at the competition. For Berzen, that connection remains part of the experience of representing Israel.

Silverman and Berzen have already experienced standing on a podium with gold medals around their necks. They now face a new challenge against a broader field. Their first international tournament title has given them confidence, but they know the World Cup will test them differently. “We deserved it,” Silverman said of their gold medal. “We worked hard. It wasn’t easy.”

For two South African-born women who discovered pickleball in Israel, the result marks a stage in a journey that has taken them from South African courts to a podium in Vietnam.

Kaplan makes music at the crease

LUKE ALFRED

Gavin Kaplan, the Boland and South Africa A batsman, describes his batting in musical terms. He talks of “rhythm” and “being in tune” with his game.

The words are useful because batting at its most fluent is akin to making music. You hit the ball sweetly, you and your bat are one. It’s not much different to playing a melody or playing your part in the orchestra. After hours and hours of numbing practice, everything unfolds with mellow, liberatingly thoughtless ease.

Like a musician who intuitively knows they’re playing faultlessly, you bat in a bubble. Everyone has their way to describe this, but it basically amounts to the same thing. You are, as the professionals say, “in the zone”.

Kaplan was so in the zone for Boland in the 2025/2026 domestic first-class season that he scored 903 runs for them, including four – sometimes double – hundreds. With international cricket the thing nowadays, domestic cricket doesn’t get the attention it deserves, but there was a time when 903 domestic runs would have led to back-page headlines. Scoring that many runs in a season puts Kaplan in elite company. He’s suddenly rubbing shoulders with the Peter Kirstens, Barry Richardses, and Graeme Pollocks of this world.

Somebody out there noticed the 903 runs last season because at the beginning of August, Kaplan received a message from Patrick Moroney, convenor of Cricket South Africa selectors. Moroney explained that Kaplan had been chosen to represent the South Africa A team against Bangladesh A in two unofficial Tests later that month and offered his congratulations. For the talented kid who once couldn’t get a regular game for Western Province and so had to move to neighbours Boland, playing for the Proteas was suddenly a step closer.

And he likes what he sees.

“I’ve loved my time with South Africa A, to be honest,” he says. “The environment has been amazing. You know the guys because you play against them, but in this situation, you get to know them a little bit better. It’s really been a great experience, whether we’re talking cricket or discussing where to watch the [Springboks’ play] rugby.”

Kaplan doesn’t use only the words of music to talk about being in flow; he talks about being calm at the crease. Time was, he thinks now, when he put a little bit too much pressure on himself to succeed. His mind is emptier now. He finds it helps.

“I’m in tune

“I know my game better now,” he says. “At the Wanderers you’ve just got to be smarter with your plans and nullify the risks the environment provides. A back-foot punch at Paarl might be a safe shot because of Paarl’s lack of bounce. That’s not true for the Wanderers, which is a bouncier deck, so you just have to adjust things and find ways to score safely.”

It’s going to be a busy summer of cricket, what with some expanded domestic competitions and in-bound Test tours by both Australia and England, who tour over Christmas and the New Year. England’s second side, the England Lions, will also be touring Mzansi, which could provide Kaplan



with rotating the strike now, and in tune with my game,” he says. “I don’t have too many technical thoughts. You can find yourself down a bit of a rabbit hole in a game like cricket if you think too technically. Beyond the fundamentals you’ve just got to go out and find a way to score runs without putting too much pressure on yourself with a ‘run-scoring’ mindset, if that makes sense?”

Kaplan’s opening game of the four-day season with Boland happens against the Lions at the Wanderers next week, so the run-scoring might be temporarily halted. The Bull Ring isn’t somewhere he’s done particularly well in the past, he says with a laugh. Perhaps things will change for the better this time?

with another opportunity to showcase his talent and put himself in the shop window for bigger things.

After a couple of four-day games for his province, Boland, the auction for the 2027 SA20 comes up in early October. Kaplan would dearly love to be involved in the SA20.

“Red ball cricket can help white ball cricket and vice versa,” he says. “To be honest I don’t see myself as exclusively a red ball cricketer.”

It’s a good attitude to have but, then again, Kaplan’s attitude – relaxed without being laid back – is in part what’s taken him so far. He knows himself; he knows his game; he knows that as long as he continues to make music, things will only get better.

The long goodbye

Before we got married, sometime in the 1990s, we were required to attend a marriage-preparation programme. The idea was to encourage young couples to communicate about areas of potential conflict: money, parents-in-law, sex, careers, religion, and so on.

In her final act of giving, my grandmother died before the course ended, sparing us the sessions on sex and religion. Which was unfortunate. But not.

In retrospect, I am amazed there wasn't at least one session devoted to leaving a function. After 35 years of wedded bliss, I would argue that this is one of the most complicated and challenging areas of marriage.

The problem is that "I'm ready to leave" means different things to different people. To one spouse, it means "I have enjoyed myself, thanked the hosts, and would now like to go home". To the other, it means "I am ready to begin the process of leaving".

The process can take anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour and a half. It involves announcing your departure, finding the hosts, remembering someone you haven't yet spoken to, starting a new conversation, and then standing at the front door discussing antisemitism with somebody you barely know. At no point does anyone actually leave.

It's particularly complicated for us because my day starts at 04:00. By 20:00 I start to get nervous, at 20:30 I look for escape routes, and by 21:00 I am in a full flight-or-flight panic. I can see nothing other than the precious hours of potential sleep disappearing, one accelerating second at a time.

At some point, I catch Heidi's eye from across the room and make the universally understood head movement towards the door. It's subtle, dignified and also, completely ignored.

A few minutes later, I try again, adding a raised eyebrow. Still nothing.

Eventually, I walk over and ask, "Should we start thinking about going?"

"I just need to say goodbye to one person," she says. There is never one person.

I have even tried the "Heidi, are you going to Uber?"

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



approach, which I consider both subtle and humorous. This is a triumph of optimism over experience because every time I use it, I receive a look that is neither subtle nor humorous, and certainly not appropriate for a family publication.

Weddings are worse. We have yet to resolve whether it is ruder to find the hosts, say goodbye and draw attention to the fact that we are leaving early, or to slip out unnoticed and risk appearing ungrateful.

It's an argument we have at every new celebration as though we have never attended a wedding together before.

My preference is the quiet escape. One moment we are there, the next we are gone. I consider it discreet. Heidi considers it socially unacceptable and possibly grounds for communal excommunication. She insists we say goodbye.

The problem is that saying goodbye at a Jewish wedding isn't a single act. First we find the hosts. Then the bride and groom. Then someone asks why we are leaving. By the time I have explained that I wake up at 04:00, reassured everyone that we had a wonderful time, and confirmed that nothing is wrong, we have attracted more attention than if I had climbed onto the table and announced our departure over the microphone.

Meanwhile, I perform frantic calculations. If we leave now, I can still get five hours. If we leave in 15 minutes, four and a half. If we don't get out of the parking lot soon, there is no point going to bed at all.

Perhaps the marriage course was right after all. Leaving a function is about communication, compromise, and accepting that the person you love experiences the world differently. I watch the clock because time is slipping away. My wife lingers because, to her, time with people matters.

And perhaps, after 35 years, the real blessing is that we still arrive together, still argue about when to go, and still leave holding hands. Even if, occasionally, it is only because I am trying to drag her out of there.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Standing in the open



ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

It has been a week in which the South African Jewish community has stood in full view of the country, in the courts, on the street, and around the Shabbat table. Looking over last week's events, what struck me most wasn't any single story but the pattern running beneath all of them: a community increasingly comfortable being seen.

In Cape Town, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' Equality Court case against Turkish-born politician Mehmet Vefa Dag returned to the headlines. Dag was true to form in court, blustering, accusing the judge of bias, and, at one point, mistaking her for someone else entirely. The matter has been postponed after Dag failed to appear with legal representation. This isn't the outcome we wanted, but the postponement itself doesn't diminish what the case represents. Our Cape Council has pioneered a legal strategy taking proactive strong stances against antisemites and those who would threaten our communal safety.

In Durban, a diplomatic Shabbat, planned around a visit from the premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Thami Ntuli, had to be reimaged at short notice when he cancelled. What could have been a disappointment turned into something better: a Shabbat dinner for the community's own leadership, with no agenda beyond being together. By most accounts it is the first time an evening like this has taken place in recent memory, and those who were there described a rare, unforced sense of unity. There was such warmth around that table that talk has already turned to making it an annual fixture.

Another event that was covered in last week's *SA Jewish Report* was the rugby walk, in which more than 60 religious community members walked from Glenhazel to Ellis Park, stopping at the iconic Lions Shul for Mincha before the rugby Test match. This forms part of a greater initiative by our community to reclaim spaces and to be visibly, unselfconsciously Jewish in public. It's easy to underestimate what an afternoon like

that means. But every step of it was a quiet argument, that our safety is not best served by making ourselves smaller, but by walking through our own city in the open, on our way to Mincha and then to the rugby, exactly as we are.

Finally, and less visibly than any of the above, leadership from our Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban councils met last week with senior representatives of the South African Police Service. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss our relationship and to show our appreciation to the various departments of the security services and their steadfast role in protecting our way of life in South Africa. The meeting also allowed us to discuss high-profile incidents, and to ensure that our lines of communication remain open.

Put together, these events point to a robust, proud, and visible community around the country. We work to ensure that our rights are protected through engagement with relevant authorities, we make sure that those who would abuse us are properly dealt with, and we express our identity in the open.

None of this happens by accident, and none of it happens quickly. Legal strategies take years to build. Trust with police leadership is earned meeting by meeting. Even a Shabbat dinner that seemed to come together on its own was, in truth, the product of a community secure enough to gather itself at a moment's notice and make something meaningful. We are no longer choosing between being safe and being visible because we have learnt that the two reinforce one another. A community that shows up, in court, at the table, and in the street, is a community that is harder to intimidate and easier to protect. That is worth holding onto, long after this particular week has folded into the next one.

This column is paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Getting along in Norwood

OPINION

TREVOR WALLER



I live in Norwood, just off Grant Avenue, a Johannesburg street that has gone through many metamorphoses over the years. At one point, it was known for its kosher restaurants. At other times, it has risen, fallen, and reinvented itself. It has never been polished or predictable, but it has always been alive. My history with the street goes back even further. I had my first date there when I was 12, at The Grub Store, below a cinema where a Woolworths and a gambling venue now stand.



Grant Avenue is filled with supermarkets, clothing shops, barbers, tailors, restaurants, and people. It's busy, slightly chaotic, and, depending on your perspective, perhaps even a little seedy. There are beggars, homeless people, and car guards. There's traffic, noise, and constant movement. Yet it's precisely this activity that makes the street feel safe to me. There are always people around, someone watching, working, shopping, greeting, or passing through.

Grant Avenue is home to a large Muslim community. Many shops are Muslim-owned, as are most of the barbers, with a mixture of Arab and Indian influences. A Palestinian flag is visible outside one shop window. At the bottom of the road, however, is a Spar with one of Johannesburg's best kosher delicatessens.

This means that on a Friday morning, a Jewish person can buy a *kitka* and chopped liver from the kosher counter, then walk up the road to a Muslim barber for a haircut. They can be visibly and unmistakably Jewish while walking along one of Johannesburg's most unmistakably Muslim streets.

At least in my own experience, nothing happens. That may sound like a strange thing to celebrate, but in

the current climate, it matters. I'm sure there have been isolated incidents, as there are anywhere. But at a time when many Jewish people around the world feel anxious about being visibly Jewish, Grant Avenue remains a place where there seems to be no need to conceal who you are. A Jewish person can walk past a shop displaying a Palestinian flag, or walk into that shop, speak to the person behind the counter, and be treated as a customer and a neighbour.

I walk along Grant Avenue a few times a day. I see Jews and Muslims sharing the same pavements, shopping in the same stores, and greeting the same car guards. I see ordinary interaction, no fear and no hatred. Whatever disagreements exist in the wider world, the people here continue to live beside one another.

There's something quietly South African about this. We're certainly not free from racism, prejudice, or antisemitism. Our history doesn't allow us to pretend that these things don't exist. Yet that same history has made open racism deeply unacceptable to many South Africans. There remains, in much of our everyday life, a powerful instinct towards "live and let live".

We may be Jewish. We may be Muslim. We may carry different histories, loyalties, beliefs, and wounds. But we're also South Africans, sharing a street, a city, and a daily life.

Grant Avenue isn't grand. It isn't especially beautiful. It's untidy, imperfect, and constantly changing. It's a small and possibly insignificant place in a troubled world. But every day, in its ordinary way, it shows me something important. Coexistence doesn't always arrive through grand declarations, political agreements, or carefully managed interfaith events. Sometimes, it looks like buying a *kitka* and chopped liver from the kosher counter before getting your hair cut by a Muslim barber.

Sometimes, hope is simply a street where nobody asks you to hide who you are.

• *Trevor Waller is the author of Twenty-Two Lessons for Now and co-founder of Two Ways. Grounded in Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, his work helps individuals, entrepreneurs, and workplace teams think clearly, speak honestly, and act with response-ability.*



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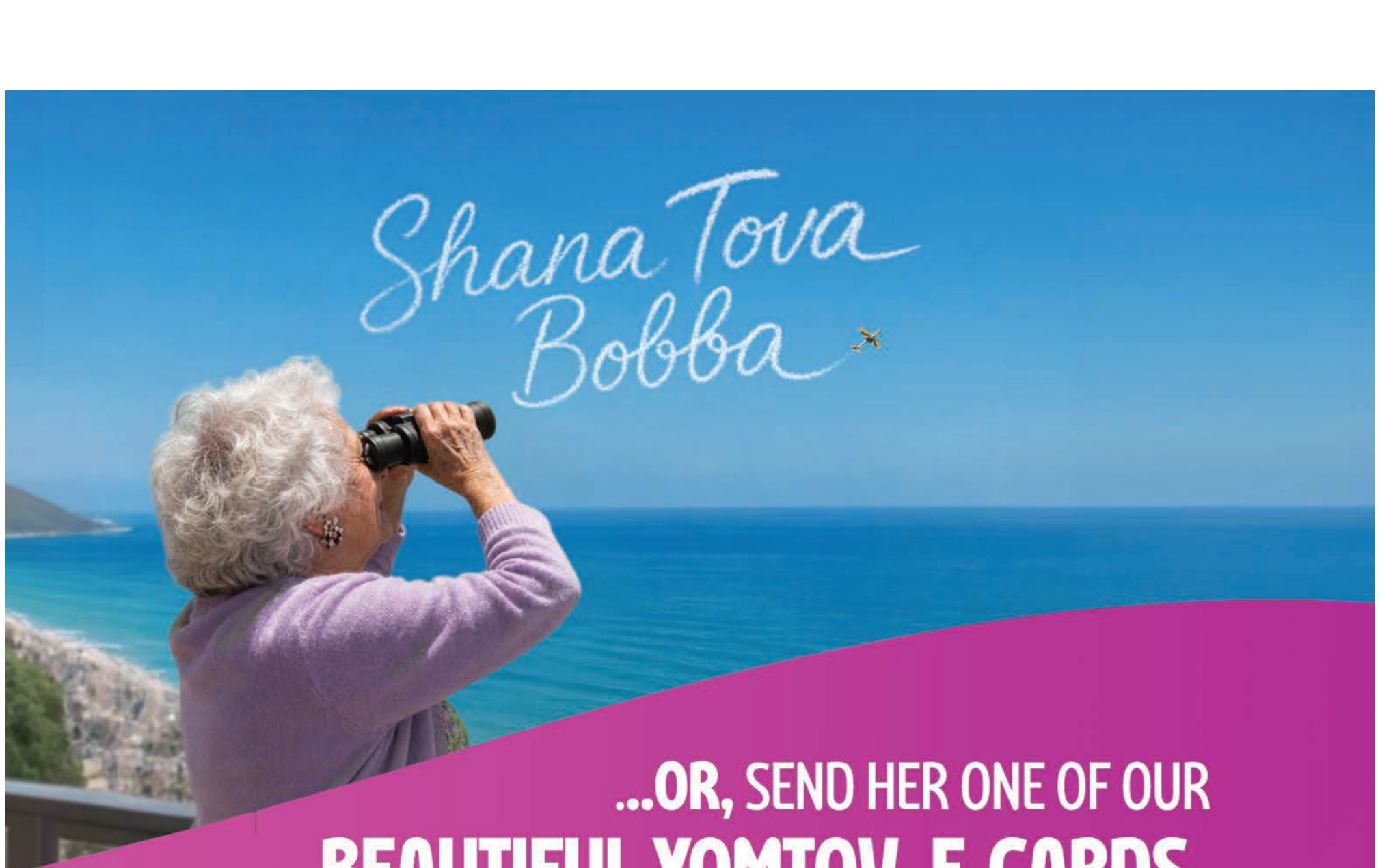
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